EXPRESSING AND DEVELOPING LOVE

Virgil Warren, PhD

INTRODUCTION

The mark of a Christian is love.
"They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love."

I. EXPRESSING LOVE

A. Doing what love produces.

We sometimes say we love our spouse, children, other Christian, or neighbors, but we don't see that our actions do not fit our claim. We do not seem to know what to do or how to love. Behaviors like the following should clarify what loving is and does.

1. Patience: 1 Corinthians **13**:4

   Taking time with people

2. Selflessness (not jealousy): 1 Corinthians **13**:4b
3. Humility: 1 Corinthians **13**:4c

   When other people see that we are willing to take second seat, they will know we care about them and what they are trying to do.

4. Thoughtfulness: 1 Corinthians **13**:5a + b

   We get tunnel consciousness just as some of us have tunnel vision.

5. Self-control

   Love does not get mad quick; it stops to find out why something unexpected has happened.

We do not have to be saying, *"I love you."* From our actions people will get the point more convincingly even if unconsciously.

As far as feelings are concerned, we may not be sure that we love other people; but by involving ourselves in the behavior of love, we can be sure we are doing loving things.

B. Giving attention to body language.

Psalm **5**:11: *"Let all those rejoice who take refuge in you;*

Let them ever shout for joy because you defend them;
Let them also that love your name be joyful in you."

A smile says, "I accept you; I am approachable; I am comfortable with you and
with myself."
Facial expressions are especially available for communication purposes.

C. Giving attention to verbal communication

10% of communication is what we say.
35% of communication is the way we say it.
55% of communication is nonverbal communication.

1. What we say

Get in the habit of not always saying what you think.
It avoids criticism that often comes under the guise of being "honest."
It avoids the laziness of not wanting to think before speaking.

2. How we say it

Tone of voice is important.

3. That we say

Getting in the habit of letting people know that we appreciate; verbalize
appreciation.
Lack of communication can cause more problems than being misunderstood
when we <u>do</u> say something.

D. Using touch.

Jesus took little kids up and held them (Mark **10**:13-16).
Holy kiss
Hug

Studies show that touching and hugging do good things for people even through
the physical contact itself.

E. Watching what loving people do to express love.

John **13**:34: *"I am giving you a new commandment: that you <u>love</u> each other,*
even as I have loved you, that <u>you</u> love each other."

John **15**:12: *"This is my commandment: that you love each other as I have*
loved you."

    F. Putting people first

Putting love ahead of pleasure, things, goods, self, power
The problem is not so much doing the loving things in and of themselves but knowing how to mix love with things like assertiveness, discipline, leadership.

II. DEVELOPING LOVE

    A. Starting to do what love produces   INNER-OUTER

The outward actions reinforce inwardly, changing the heart.
    Starting with the outer is not phony behavior.
    We start there with the motive of developing the inner, not to deceive.
    We need not worry that a certain feeling is not there; the feeling will come because feelings arise more readily from actions than from thoughts and words.

    B. Deliberately emphasizing the products of love that are   HOLISTIC NATURE
        already our strengths.   OF MAN

Our personality strengths feed off onto our weaknesses <u>because</u> we tend to become consistent—in this case consistent in <u>love</u>. Most virtues stem from love; so we strengthen our weaknesses by strengthening our love, which is done by outer actions (strengths) reinforcing inward on the attitude. The practice of love consolidates our efforts—as in consolidating debts.

    1. Love produces the effects in 1 Corinthians **13**.
    2. Outward expression deepens inward feelings.
    3. We can overcome a fault not consonant with love (temper) by working through what we have already developed.

It is important to be consistent so people will give us the benefit of the doubt in ambiguous cases.
Living deliberately means not living by our feelings or impulses. In order to love, we have to live above feelings and impulses. We have to live by principle and operate by will.
We can overcome our faults by stressing our virtues, which becomes loving. All individual virtues well up from the same spring: love.
Concentrate on love by stressing the outward strengths we already have.
Instead of trying to concentrate on a lot of virtues at once, we can concentrate on the one virtue that produces the rest: love. Even further, by concentrating on one product of love, we gain access to a way of bringing the other products on line. That procedure works because all virtues "touch" all other virtues like the pieces of a pie. Our personality is an integrated thing.

    C. Treating everyone the way we treat the people we like   TRANSFER

       Generalize it to acquaintances and even to our enemies.

    D. Putting ourselves around loving people to <u>see</u> what they do   INFLUENCE
and to motivate ourselves to do it.

       This approach takes advantage of the interpersonal component (reciprocation).
       Their influence helps call forth that behavior in us. We may pick up some ways of
carrying yourselves that help us express love.

    E. Starting by making a point of treating other people the way GOLDEN-RULE
we would want to be treated if we were in their shoes.   MECHANISM

       Before we speak, we should stop to think about how people will take our
          remarks.

    F. Helping other people develop their ability to love.   SERVICE AS A MEANS
                                       TO SANCTIFICATION

       This method puts the pressure on us not to mess up in the very thing we are
          teaching.
       Taking up the ministry mentality. It provides <u>concentration</u>.
                          It lets <u>attention fall on the other person</u>, and
                          we get out of ourselves, which is itself one
                          of the necessities of love anyway.

CONCLUSION

The general point is to quit living by habit and live deliberately.
                          unconsciously and live consciously.
                          by impulse and live intentionally.
                          by feelings and live by values.

    KEY TO BOTH <u>EXPRESSING</u> AND <u>DEVELOPING</u> LOVE

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