

## **WHAT KIND OF LOVE IS THIS?**

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September 21, 2014 Broadway Christian Church

What is love? Seeing how Ezra & remnant handled divided marriages among God's people shows us the depths of love.

### **I. THERE WAS A PROBLEM AMONG THE REMNANT.**

#### **A. Ezra & the people knew they were in \_\_\_\_\_.**

1. Ezra & the people wept bitterly because they knew their national history & intermarriage with pagans led to the destruction of the nation.
2. We like to think that good will bring bad up to the level of the good. It seldom works that way. "Do not be deceived; bad company corrupts good character." (I Cor. 15:33)

#### **B. The whole people decided to call for a \_\_\_\_\_ on what had to be done.**

1. v. 2 Shekariah spokesman on behalf of people, urges Ezra to take action & tells Ezra he will have their full support. Shekariah had not married foreign women him-self but his father & five uncles had. (v. 26) Shekariah loved God & God's law & ways more than his family & their approval. So should it be among us.

#### **C. There was \_\_\_\_\_ on putting away foreign, pagan wives and children belonging to Jewish men.**

1. When they got together, it was December, a rainy time. Why was this such a big deal?
  - a. Deuteronomy 7:1-5. God had told people as were going into Promised Land that intermarriage w/ pagan peoples without pagans converting to Judaism was forbidden.
2. Did it work? After the exile, never again would Jewish people follow idols. The destruction of nation, temple & Jerusalem cured them of following \_\_\_\_\_.

### **II. APPLICATION TO OUR SITUATION.**

#### **A. \_\_\_\_\_ relationships are central to a healthy church.**

1. **Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*:** "There is a highly significant relationship between the ability of a church to demonstrate love & its long-term growth potential. Growing churches possess on the average a measurably higher 'love quotient' than stagnant or declining ones." He adds these characteristics that show love is present:
  - a. Members spend time with each other \_\_\_\_\_ of church functions.
  - b. Members \_\_\_\_\_ each other frequently.
  - c. Pastors & leaders are aware of personal problems of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. There is much \_\_\_\_\_ in the church.
2. He continues, "Unfeigned, practical loves has divinely generated

magnetic power far more effective than evangelistic programs which depend almost entirely upon verbal communication. People do not want to hear us talk about love, they want to experience how Christian love really works."

#### **B. Love for one another means we do \_\_\_\_\_ to one another.**

1. It is not love to try to destroy, thwart or hinder a fellow believer from doing what God is calling them to do. Remember what we have said:
  - a. Healthy church allow people to exercise \_\_\_\_\_ gifts.
  - b. Healthy churches exhibit functional organization ie. leadership exists to lead & reproduce or develop \_\_\_\_\_ leaders. Tradition may guide us but it does not control us.
  - c. Healthy churches empower others to take action.

#### **C. Love for one another will \_\_\_\_\_ us together.**

1. Captain & Tenille sang: Love, love will keep us together
2. For Christian love to keep us together, and it will, we must be committed to one another. We must really want to develop, share & maintain a relationship of enduring quality.
3. Christian love has three dimensions to it.
  - a. Christian love is a \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit. Gal. 5:22 —
  - b. Christian love is rooted in what we \_\_\_\_\_ c. one another.
  - c. Christian love is an \_\_\_\_\_. We dare to care.
4. You will note that I have not said Christian love is a \_\_\_\_\_. Christian love precedes feeling & transcends it. Oh, feelings come but they also go. Christian love abides & Christian love keeps us together.

#### **D. Love for one another compels us to face \_\_\_\_\_ truths about one another & find \_\_\_\_\_ solutions in relationship.**

1. Ezra & remnant had to face hard truths c. one another.
2. Brothers & sisters, if we truly love one another, we will confront one another when we need to.

#### **E. Love for one another means we honor \_\_\_\_\_ in our relationships by carefully choosing our friends and life companions.**

1. Our church statement of belief: "We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord; and, that separation from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices and associations is commanded of God."
2. Let me put it plainly: You can't live for God if you're \_\_\_\_\_ with the devil & his crowd. Jesus said it this way, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other." (Mt. 6:24)
3. "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character." (I Cor. 15:33)
4. Choose carefully those who you will let into your heart & influence you. Choose to marry a godly man or woman. Choose to befriend godly men & women. Choose to live as a godly man or woman & the blessings of God will abide upon you & you will know the best kind of love, the very best love ever — \_\_\_\_\_ love.