

My Call Is to Love

By Victor Beshir

The Touch of Love

The most important act in evangelism is love. Some people think of evangelism as merely preaching, talking to others, or offering advice. The reality is, unless every act of evangelism is born out of love, it will not bear the right fruit.

It all starts with a touch of love, a touch of His love that gently but strongly penetrates our hearts. The sweetness of this touch gives us a taste of the richness and fullness of His eternal love, a love that even the most inspired and accomplished writer cannot describe in words. The enlightenment of this touch diverts our hearts and eyes from the dust of the earth and all the earthly desires, to the heaven where the fullness of our lives reside. Moreover, while we still work on our errands and duties, like a powerful magnet, it attracts us closer to heaven and to Him, changing us into different people who no longer find satisfaction and joy in earthly objects, as we used to, but rather in Him and in His love alone.

This love is the starting point for evangelism and missionary work. It should come before preaching, talking, lecturing, and doing missionary work. Love is the power generator for evangelism.

To be touched by the love of God is to deeply realize the magnitude of His salvation. When this great love touched St. Paul, he felt strongly pressed to go near and far, unceasingly preaching the Gospel (the good news of salvation) to others. He summarized what happened to him in the following golden verse, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, **who loved me and gave Himself for me.**” (Galatians 2:20).

What can I do if I have not experienced this love yet?

The answer is simple: pray and ask that His love fill your heart. Then His love will visit you in a way that you never expected. This love can visit you while you are holding a poor child in Africa, sitting amidst children in an orphanage, in a prayer meeting, or after spending a few days on a missionary trip. Some people receive this loving touch while kneeling down in prayer in their private room.

The rule is, the closer we get to him the more this flame of love grows in our hearts. Since the Spirit of God is a Spirit of love, the power of His Spirit manifests powerfully when we unite in prayer with one heart. That is why the best way to be filled with this love, is to start a prayer group where you meet with a few friends on a weekly basis just to pray. These prayer meetings were the secret behind the success of the Sunday school movement in Egypt, and were the place where hundreds of our great Coptic bishops, priests, servants, and monks received their call from God to follow Him. We heard about these prayer meetings in the book of acts, “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was **shaken**. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31).

My job in evangelism is to show Christ's love:

Evangelism is to show others Christ's love written all over my body and shown in my words and behavior.

“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.” (1 John 3:16).

“Therefore **be imitators of God** as dear children. And walk in love, **as Christ also has loved us** and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Ephesians 5:1, 2).

The school of divine love

Since love is not simply words that could be attained by reading books, to obtain this love I need something else. I need to be a student in the school of divine love. The school of divine love assumes that we live a life of prayer and that we feed on the scriptures, the breaths of God as the Fathers said. Here are the instructions of this school; but, before examining these instructions, you may feel that you already know them all, but just wait and keep reading to find the evangelistic perspective of each.

1- To Love is to:

- ❖ Never belittle, insult, or put a person down. You will never win a person to Christ if you put him/her down and insults are wounds that hurt.
- ❖ Never embarrass a person
- ❖ Encourage everyone
- ❖ Find something good in every person and tell him/her about it
- ❖ Never take revenge
- ❖ Listen more and talk less
- ❖ Be gentle and meek
- ❖ When it comes to personal issues, talk in private
- ❖ Respect is the key to love
- ❖ Tolerate others' differences, without sacrificing or compromising the truth
- ❖ Do not judge a person by outer appearance, work instead on opening the person's heart for Christ first, and then the appearance will change.
- ❖ Accept the person as he/she is and then help him/her to meet Christ
- ❖ Instead of judging bad behavior, start by teaching good behavior first
- ❖ Put yourself in the other's shoes
- ❖ In your church and service, do not act as the Pharisees who wished to stone the sinful woman, but rather act as Christ, who showed mercy towards her even though she deserved death according to the law. Put mercy and love above laws, regulations, and canons.
- ❖ Be positive. Never concentrate on the negatives of people, but encourage the positive
- ❖ Build trust through mercy and forgiveness by caring, understanding, and refraining from judging.

2- To Love is to give:

Our call as evangelism workers is to give:

- ❖ Give a smile to each person you meet
- ❖ Greet each person warmly
- ❖ Give a comforting word whenever possible
- ❖ Give a hug to a person in need of a hug (Get familiar with norms in the culture before doing this)
- ❖ Give a Christian loving touch
- ❖ Give a sincere caring look to a person in trouble
- ❖ Show compassion
- ❖ Offer help at work as much as you can, especially to those you want to approach and evangelize; let them see Christ's love in you
- ❖ Say welcoming words to someone who has nobody to welcome
- ❖ Be the person who warmly welcomes the new comers in your church. Sit next to them, help them to follow the prayers, introduce them to others and to the priest, accompany them to the coffee room, tell them that you enjoyed meeting them and ask them to come again. In one word, offer yourself as a good Christian friend.

2- To Love is to sacrifice:

- ❖ The best, though most rare gift to give nowadays is time
- ❖ Give time to those whose parents and others do not have time for
- ❖ Sacrifice your resting time to help those in need
- ❖ Sacrifice your best place for someone else and when asked say this is what my Lord teaches me to do.
- ❖ In church meetings or among friends, don't talk first, let others talk, especially those who are not usually given a chance to talk
- ❖ Share with others food, gifts, and other things
- ❖ Buy birthday gifts that are evangelistic in nature to give to those who need it, but be considerate of the persons' personality, likes, and hobbies when selecting the gift.
- ❖ When someone is sick or a member of his/her family is sick, sacrifice time to be with them
- ❖ When someone faces tribulations or a death in the family, offer yourself to help, noting that sometimes the best help to offer is just to be there
- ❖ For those who consider you as an enemy, offer all love and give every sacrifice

3- To love is to not think of yourself but of others:

- ❖ Think of those who drifted away from God and pray for them heartily as if this person is your child or your brother
- ❖ Pray for others' needs as if you have these needs
- ❖ Help the needy. Even when you don't have money to give, think of other gifts that are sometimes more important than money like friendship and support
- ❖ Put others comfort before yours
- ❖ Try to gladly walk the second mile when you are asked for the first mile

4- To love is to show the love of Christ

- ❖ From time to time say that you do what you do because “He taught me to love; He loved us to the death on the cross”
- ❖ When appropriate say to people “Christ loves you” and that “Christ have done that for you to spend your eternity with Him in heaven”
- ❖ When appropriate tell people that only Christ can fulfill their inner hunger and need

5- To love is to heal the wounds

- ❖ There are psychologically wounded people every where you turn, in the family, in the church, at work, so help them with prayers
- ❖ Don't give advice but rather give support
- ❖ Help those who are weary and overburdened to live one day at a time
- ❖ Help people to forget the past and forgive as much as they can
- ❖ Draw people to the sources of healing: prayers, Bible readings, meditation in heaven and eternal life
- ❖ Show them that sin is the source of most of the scars we have in our life and only Christ can heal these scars.

6- To love is to be thoughtful and supportive

- ❖ Give a pat on the shoulder
- ❖ Remember others' important dates, such as birthdates, and use this as an opportunity to show love
- ❖ While the person is only thinking of him/herself, be thoughtful of them
- ❖ Think of others' needs and rush to offer them without waiting until the person humiliates himself/herself before others. Do this with discretion and consideration.
- ❖ Show forgiveness towards people in their bad times
- ❖ When you hear that someone or a member of the family is sick or facing tribulations, offer your heartily support
- ❖ Be thoughtful towards those who envy or hate you

7- *To love is to win others for Christ and not for myself*

8- To love is to be patient

- ❖ While people around you haste to judge others, be patient, giving time for prayers and forgiveness
- ❖ When people in the church disagree because of the service, be patient and let God's will be done, not yours
- ❖ If others fight you in the service, be patient and wait for God's work. Be willing to leave everything to maintain Christ's love
- ❖ When all others consider 'winning', be willing to 'loose' for the sake of showing Christ's love
- ❖ Train yourself on self control
- ❖ Avoid anger by all means

- 9- To love is to become a shoulder for others to cry on
- 10- To love is not to judge but to build others spiritually
- 11- Love is joy

Of course, all the acts of love should be done in wisdom, not the wisdom of this world but the spiritual wisdom from above.

Without Christ's love, we may go to the end of the earth to evangelize. However, while preaching the gospel, people will manage to see our impatience, our inability to accept others, our roughness in relationships, or our acts of selfish. Then, it will be hard for them to accept the Gospel.

Question to answer & e-mail to the instructor:

- 1- Please write down some examples of Love in Evangelism, showing how love can affect the results of evangelism?
- 2- Christ is our example in evangelism. Show how love was manifested in His service? The following lesson will be a collection of your answers to this question. So, please meditate in His life, open your heart, and mind to see His unmatched love in His service.