

St. David's Presbyterian Church  
St. John's, NL  
"The Power of Love..."  
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*The power of love is a curious thing  
make a one man weep, make another man sing  
Change a hawk to a little white dove  
more than a feeling, that's the power of love...*Huey Lewis and the News

Love is more than we can talk about this morning. But one working definition for love is "seeking another's best first." This is not always easy. Sometimes it involves firmly saying "no" to someone, perhaps your child, perhaps someone who is trying to get something out of you, perhaps someone who has boundary issues. Seeking their best involves firm determination to do so regardless of the personal cost. We see creativity and determination in the movies all the time in terms of romantic love. But do we have the stamina to love our friends and our neighbors appropriately?

As you've probably heard, there are several words in Greek for love, but the one used in here in Hebrews 13, verse 1 is *Philadelphia*. Yes, it's also a place in Asia Minor and in Pennsylvania, but first of all a Greek word. *Philia* is the word for friendship love, and *delphia* is the word for brothers. Some translate it "brotherly love," which is literally correct and then others translate it into the broader church context and say "mutual affection." But as Huey says above it is more than a feeling, it is an action plan.

So what does a love action plan look like? Let me give you the top ten as is often done in late night TV. These are not in order of priority but rather following the scriptural order in Hebrews 13.

Number 1: Friendship love. Making friends that last is difficult. It takes time, energy, creativity, perseverance and forgiveness. But when you find a true friend, you've found a great treasure. Find a friend by being a friend, and risking opening your life to that person.

Number 2: Hospitality. Another way to show love is invite someone into your home. Newfoundland is well known for its wonderful hospitality. I have experienced it here as nowhere else. This is not to say that everyone

here is hospitable. It is to say that we must continue to be creative in opening our homes to others, both for fellowship, for outreach and for the joy of giving.

Number 3: Visitation. There are some places that are difficult to visit. Two that come to mind are prisons and hospitals. Now some might say government offices are also difficult to visit, but that's another story. Prisons are by nature places of forced detention. You never know what you will find in terms of attitude, when you visit with an inmate. But to show God's love to someone who knows they have committed a serious crime is encouraged in the Scripture. Visiting a hospital similarly is difficult. In prisons, we face the dark side of our humanity. In hospital, we face suffering and death. So if you feel uncomfortable visiting in either of these institutions, you have good reason to feel that way. Nevertheless, both of these places are places that the gospel and the love of God need to be shared creatively and earnestly. If you are interested in this type of visitation, please share this desire with me or one of the elders. We'll see if we can build this part of our ministry here together. This goes for any of the ten things I'm mentioning today.

Number 4: Marriage. Sometimes you can see God's intention for humanity beautifully worked out in a relationship. Marriage was meant to be that place of safety and intimacy. No one has a perfect marriage. But God reminds us to keep working at it. This is not a day and age where marriage is respected or honoured. God encourages us to make it more respected and more honoured by how we live with one another, so others will see a reflection of heaven in this relationship.

Number 5: Contentment. We live in an age of "more is better." Marketing is built on the notion that what you currently have cannot possibly keep you content. You must have the newest stuff. And if you get it, you will be happy, truly content. Surprisingly I find myself drawn to believe this consumerist deception, do you?. Yeah, I need new stuff, more stuff, constantly. The Scripture encourages us to think again. Will that new purchase truly satisfy? On the other hand, if we tend to not want to spend any money, so as to keep it or hoard it, be careful lest we think our true security is in money or things. Our true security comes from the relationship we have to our living God. No security or alarm company can give the

peace of mind that God can give as we trust Him for our lives, our loved ones and our possessions.

Number 6: No fear. I've seen this slogan on trucks and skateboards. I think it is a reference to bravado and massive pride, saying to yourself, "I can do anything, anytime. I should fear no one and nothing." The Scriptures encourage us to be confident in God, to have God confidence even more than self-confidence. Then as we trust Him, he protects us from what most people fear. Even the fear of darkness, suffering, and death can be settled in His presence.

Number 7: Respecting your leaders. Today the anti-hero outshines the hero and the leader. It seems that hacking gets more press and respect than studying or serving. So God reminds us to honour those on the front line in the church, and on the mission field around the world. He encourages a respect that doesn't come naturally, and that even the early church had difficulty doing. Because these days, rebellion and disrespectful behaviour are seen as amusing and even entertaining. But God says to pay attention to those who are trying to teach you the Bible in a way that makes sense and is faithful to what it says. This isn't to force you to honour me, it is to make you aware and thankful for what you have received and what you are receiving and will receive, whoever the source.

Number 8: The true source is Jesus. And although the word "conservative" has come to be only couched in the context of politics, nevertheless, the Scriptures clearly let us know that we must have a conservative view of Jesus. Have you heard that people see Jesus in their own image, radicals see him as radical, hippies see him as a hippie, those who only look for the status quo see him as upholding the status quo, and so on? But when I think of the word "conservative," I think it means trying to keep the same that which is, "to conserve." Perhaps constancy or consistency is a better word. But what we find in this passage about Jesus is that he is the same, yesterday, today and forever. If you want to learn about love, learn about him. Fall in love with him. He will consistently love you and teach you to love.

Number 9: Praise. We praise those who serve us well. We praise those who care for us, who feed us, who nurture. And we should. We should also praise the One who created us, and knows us inside and out. As we do that,

he shows how much it will cost us. Because your Christianity costs you. If it does not cost you anything, it is either inauthentic or powerless. Praising Jesus, whether through music or by some other means, is a sacrifice. Praising Him pleases God and puts us in a right relationship to the rest of humanity and creation.

Number 10: Doing good and sharing. When I was growing up I heard someone talking about Christians in a derogatory tone as a bunch of do-gooders. I've never been able to find out why that is a slur. Doing good to one another is wonderful gift, to a friend, to a neighbor, to a family member, to a stranger... It is something of the overflow of God's love in our lives, which this top ten list the author to the Hebrews gives to us, so that we might become more and more loving.

Friendship and hospitality and visiting places others don't like to visit, these are part of the outflow of the love of God in our own hearts. Marriage and contentment and confidence in God that takes away our fears is a part of God's transforming love in us. His presence in us really does change us. Respect for leaders in an age that has seen so many leaders fall down in their responsibilities, centering our hope and hearts on Jesus who will not let us down, and simply doing good and sharing the good things that God has given us with others.

There were three little dots (officially called ellipsis points) were omitted from today's bulletin after the word "love." The Power of Love... Isn't it true that the strength, grace and character of our love really show forth in our lives, or not? It is the dot dot dot of that love action plan that we need to reflect upon and consider what our role is here in this place.

The top ten list I just went through was meant to show the power of love from God's hand. Let's continue in this season of thanksgiving, from the blueberry harvest to the Fall harvest in October, let us continue to grow in God's love, and experience first hand the power that is there.

Let us pray.