

"All In Love"  
February 11, 2018  
2 Corinthians 6:3-10

We are wrapping up our SHIFT series. Our focus for the first six weeks of 2018 has been on helping us as a congregation to look more like Jesus in every way. Making this SHIFT will help to prepare the way for our new mission focus of putting families first, sharing the gospel with our communities, and on serving those most in need through missions.

So, let's look at the why, why do we even need a new vision, right? Why do we care about putting our families first, or about centering our work as a church within our communities, or being mindful of the mission field where the field is ready and the workers doing God's work are few? Why can't we just focus on ourselves and our own church and doing the best we can, especially in a world that so often rejects the genuine love of Christ and the salvation message? Why do we have to do what's hard?

In our passage today, the Apostle Paul reminds of our why--our reason to move out of our comfort zones to reach others. He reminds us how to do the work of impacting the world for God. No matter what we do for Christ or the kingdom, we must ***do it all in love.*** Love is the why of what we do. We do are about families and communities and missions because of love. God's love for us, God's love in us and God's love for others.

**Whatever we do, do it in love.**

*<sup>10</sup> This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ~ 1 John 4: 10-11*

We as a church are following a new vision in 2018-2020. This vision moves us out into a world that desperately needs what we have: an understanding of the Creator's sacrificial love for us and His desire for us to live full, rich, abundant lives (John 10:10).

In our SHIFT series, we looked at ways to ensure that we are equipped for the work of the Lord as we move into our new vision.

- In week 1 we talked about building a strong devotional life. Our faith in Christ becomes stronger and healthier when we consistently study God's word and dedicate time to prayer and community with other believers. The sincere love we demonstrate for others becomes much more evident as we devote time to building our one-on-one relationship with God each day.
- In week 2 we talked about righteousness and living in a way that people will not find fault in us. We do the right things for the right reasons when we rely on God's power to help us with everything that we need in life.
- In week 3 we talked about how our faith steps big and small can help bring salvation to our whole family just like Rahab's did when she participated in God's plan during her day. Our faithful living can cause them to develop stronger faith as well, rather than stumble or fall.
- In week 4 we talked about how our neighborhoods and communities need to see more of the power and presence of the living God every day. Take the risk and to serve God by sharing His word no matter what the negative reaction may be. Reaching out to neighbors or acquaintances may just change someone's life and introduce someone to true faith in Christ.
- Last week we talked about the urgency of eternity--evangelism and missions. There are people who reject Christ's message and others who are already living full-out for God, but there is a whole world of

people who are somewhere in between. We can help heal a hurting world and serve those most in need of Christ's love and basic human needs as well. We may not feel strong enough to serve others. Maybe we feel emotionally or spiritually weak or that we lack financially. But through Christ, as believers, we truly have everything.

Ultimately, our SHIFT in vision is not so much about us. It is about God and His love for the entire world. So many people everywhere are very far from God and need to see, hear, and feel God's message of love and redemption. As part of God's kingdom, we should consider ourselves not to be "safe" through salvation, but always on assignment. We are messengers of God's love to a lost and hurting world, near and far.

### **We are messengers of God's love.**

*In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. - 2 Corinthians 6:4*

If you are a believer, you are at a great **eternal advantage**. Our Bible tells us that if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we have the Spirit of God living inside of us. The same Spirit of God that raised Christ our Hope from the dead is alive and well in us if we have that faith (1 John 4:15; Romans 8:11). There is more than enough of this blessing to go around! God wants everyone to be in this position of advantage. He is patient with everyone, giving them time to come to faith and to trust Him with their lives (2 Peter 3: 8-15). Anyone and everyone who believes his message and accepts the love that he extends has the right to become a child of God and a new person in Christ (John 1:8-13). Without exception or prejudice, the door to love in Christ is open to everyone. The only way that people will learn about this love and this gift is if other believers share this love with them by what we say and by what we do.

If we love God, we want to be more like Him in our thoughts, in our behaviors, and in the way our hearts move. The Lord's heart is that He does not want anyone to live separately from Him in eternity. This love that God has for all people should move us to want to share it with people in our communities, our families and in the world who have very little idea about God. *We take for granted that people in the United States know about Jesus, were raised in church, or have an understanding of the gospel message. While this may have been true a generation or two ago, this is no longer the case.*

*There are people who have never heard of Jesus Christ at all, and some of them are our neighbors!* The opportunities are everywhere if we are willing to SHIFT our focus from what we do just for ourselves and look for opportunities to serve God in greater ways right where we are.

Maybe people around us are aware of God and the love of Christ, but they are not necessarily "feeling it," especially from Christians. Maybe they feel judged because of how they live. It might be that people have questioned their faith because of something they do or don't do. Maybe their lives are in such a condition that they believe God is no longer with them or for them. They may ask where God was during their times of trial or tragedy. No one called, or stopped by, or asked if they could help, or prayed with them.

Nothing is worse for the Gospel than feeling like people have excluded us or forgotten about us. It is heartbreaking. It breaks the person's heart, and it breaks God's heart. But the Spirit of God is never far away from people who are hurting.

### **God has a heart for the broken.**

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. - Psalm 34:18*

If we love God, we should not be far away, either, from people who are excluded or hurting or left out. There are **people right in our circle** who truly have no idea of the power and the blessing that a genuine faith in Christ will bring to their lives. They suffer needlessly because they just don't know the power of God.

Maybe you feel "stuck" sometimes on things like what do I say? What can I give when I don't have enough? What if the person won't listen to me? These are fears and God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, and of love to do the things that He has equipped us to do. We can do it! Big or small, we can take action for God that shows that God really does love all of us. God is an infinite and creative God, so there are infinite ways to reach people with the love of Jesus. We don't have to feel limited or ill-equipped or afraid.

Remember, there are people who don't know Jesus, the people who have great needs and are near us, and there are people who are neglected or left out. We all know somebody in one of these camps. Maybe that is you right now. Maybe that was you before Jesus. Who do you know? Can you think of one person in your life who doesn't know Jesus? Who doesn't know how much God loves them?

Remember that the Good News is ours to share! Love means caring about God's heart-desire not to leave anyone behind. Love means caring enough about the people who Jesus died to save. It means living into the vision of putting our families first, centering in on our communities, and focusing in on the mission of helping hands. If we're going to show God love, then we need to believe with all our hearts that Love means action.

#### **Love means action.**

*16 We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? 18 Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. 19 Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. ~ 1 John 3:16-19*

None of this is easy but we don't have to do any of this on our own. The same way that God sends love to the brokenhearted and people in need, He sends help to those who are spreading His love throughout the world. Let's continue to SHIFT in 2018 and beyond. In everything that we do--in our devotional lives, in our families, in our communities, and all over--let's do as Paul encourages us to do in our passage today. Let's look for creative and life-giving ways to reflect our sincere love for God and His people.