



Part 2: Devoted Love in a Culture of Disconnection

John 13:1-5, 34-35

We need resilience to embody God's devoted love to one another.

I. God: A Community of Devoted Love

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." – A.W. Tozer

When you hear the word "God," what comes to your mind? Since we are mostly Westerners here, my guess is that what comes to your mind is a solitary Being whom you would use certain words to describe. This, however, is not the Christian vision of God.

"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." 1 John 4:16

At the center of reality is love, which means relationship is at the center of reality. For there to be love, there is a lover and a beloved. There is a relationship. At the center of Reality is God, which means the center of Reality is a community of devoted love.

"In the deepest mystery of His Being God is an intimate relationship, a fellowship, a community of love." Darrell Johnson, *Experiencing the Trinity*

When you read the Gospels, you see this amazing truth being lived out in the life of Jesus, who is inviting others into this Eternal community of devoted love.

"Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father... Jesus knew the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God..." John 13:1, 3

If we have our image of God healed in this way, we will see two things at once in this scene in John 13.

We will rightly be shocked to see the Son of God humble himself in this way. He kneels to wash dirty, smelly feet. The One who was present with the Father and the Spirit at creation stoops down to wash feet! This should seem scandalous to us if we are thinking at all!

But if we see Reality – see God as the community of perfect love – we may begin to also see that Jesus is doing exactly what *this kind of God* might do! Jesus is doing what this kind of God would do for His friends. He is embodying a parable of their salvation. The way God saves is through his humble submission to His own justice to save those He loves!

Salvation in the gospel means many things, but at its heart it means being invited into an eternal community of perfect love.

“And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:3b

And love is costly. Agape love is not merely a warm feeling, but a settled, resilience in seeking the welfare of the beloved. It is “devoted love.”

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
John 13:34-35

Jesus says that the greatest apologetic to the reality of who God is in Jesus is a community of devoted love.

Given this reality, we can expect our love for one another to be opposed by Satan and resisted by our own sin nature.

We need resilience to embody God’s devoted love to one another.

II. The Church: A Community of Devoted Love

“Jesus envisions his church as a joyful circle of resilience, a network of devoted love, love-drenched, life-sustaining friendships.” – “The Practice: Devoted Love in a Culture of Disconnection”

“be devoted to one another” (Romans 12:10)
“rejoice & weep with one another” (Romans 12:15)
“instruct one another” (Romans 15:14)
“admonish one another” (Colossians 3:16)
“serve one another” (Galatians 5:13)
“carry one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2)
“comfort one another” (2 Corinthians 1:4)
“encourage one another” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
“submit to one another” (Ephesians 5:21)
“confess your sins to one another” (James 5:16)

“pray for one another” (James 5:16)

“encourage one another daily...so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (Hebrews 3:13)

“spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

God’s devoted love must be experienced. Cloud & Townsend say that our head works with “information gathering,” but our hearts work with “experience gathering.”

“We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange – open wide your hearts also.” 2 Corinthians 6:11-13

The love of God embodied in Jesus is now embodied through Jesus’ people, who are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Both the truth and the grace of God require relationships of devoted love to be experienced.

Take forgiveness as an example:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

“Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5:16

III. Resilience Needed

M. Scott Peck writes of the danger of pseudo community in his book, *A Different Drum*. He describes 4 stages the stages of working towards true community:

True Community

1. Pseudo-community = we repress or restrain our real opinions and pain to get along.
2. Chaos = we get honest with each other as differences or sin arise.
3. Emptiness = the hardest and crucial stage = we empty ourselves of barriers to communication.
4. True community = we empty our ego and agenda to embody sacrificial love rather than self-fulfillment.

“Within our local spiritual community, we work side by side with each other to create a community characterized by the mutual love of the Trinity and to offer this mutual love and

belonging to the world ... in order to be part of building something larger than ourselves, we have to stay and remain engaged when things get difficult.” – Todd Hall

IV. The Resilience of Jesus for Us

Q – How do we find the resources to risk this kind of community of devoted love?

And it is a real risk. Remember that Jesus promised us trouble in this world including relational trouble and pain. If you risk love, you will be disappointed and probably hurt along the way.

But the alternative is not really an option for those who belong to Jesus, because he calls us to love one another with his devoted love. And his call is the way we experience so much of his love through his Body.

I suggest we look to him as our model and our source of love to love others.

“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.” John 13:3-4

Recommended resources:

[The Practice of Resilience: Devoted Love in a Culture of Disconnection](#)

[The Practice of Spiritual Friendship](#)

Discussion Questions:

1. Consider the quote by A.W. Tozer. What words or images come to you mind when you think of the word “God”?
2. Consider the quote by Darrell Johnson about the Trinity. How does this inform your image of God?
3. Read John 13:1-5, 34-35. Thinking of how Jesus embodies the love of God, what does this story reveal about God’s love? What are the implications for us?
4. Consider the selected “one another” Scriptures. What do these teach us about God’s will for us and our local churches? What is necessary to embody these commands?
5. What is your response to M. Scott Peck’s 4 stages of true community? What has been your personal experience with these stages?
6. Spend about 5 minutes meditating on John 13:1-5 again. Do you sense the Holy Spirit saying anything to you personally?