

# STONE HARBOR

**P.O. Box 4049  
Monterey CA, 93942  
831.655.5800  
[www.stoneharborchurch.org](http://www.stoneharborchurch.org)  
Pastor Johnny Potter**

Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at [johnny@stoneharborchurch.org](mailto:johnny@stoneharborchurch.org).

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,

Johnny

## ***Transformation Card***

*This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.*

Date: Aug 15, 2010

### **Sermon Audio**

Full Msg. Title: **God Intends the Church to Love**

Short Ver. Title: Love in the Church

Sub-Title\*: The Church of God's Intention

Text: 1 Cor 13, 1 John

Key Words: Love, Church

\* Series Title

### **Transformation Card**

Series: The Church of God's Intention

Part: Part 3 – How God Intends the Church to Operate

Section:

Topic: Love

Full Msg. Title: **God Intends the Church to Love**

Outline Title: To Love we Must...

### ***Message Outline***

#### **God Intends the Church to Love**

To Love we Must...

1. Understand Love

2. Know Love in Us

3. Live Love Out from Us

### ***God's Word for Devotions***

1. 1 Cor 13

2. 1 John

3. Mark 8:27-38

### ***Talk About It With Your Friends and Family***

1. What is God's love?

2. What is the evidence of God's love in you?

3. What do you do with the non-love you see in you?

4. How can you live out the love God has enabled in you?

### ***Memory and Meditation Verse***

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." 1 Cor 13:1 (NASB)

## Part 3 – How God Intends the Church to Operate

### A. *First Things First – Love*

Edmond Clowney prefaces his discussion on the structure of the church with the following words...

*“Better by far are imperfect structures in the hands of devoted servants of Christ than the most biblical form of church government practiced in pride or in a loveless and vindictive spirit.” P.202*

Devotion and loves makes all the difference in the church.

Before we talk about something as practical and mechanical as the structure of the church, i.e., how the church should be organized and operated, we must elevate what is most important to its priority status in our thinking. This I know... this is the priority... this is the corner that must be laid first before we can build upon it...

That priority is love!

1 Cor 13:ff

If I... but do not have love...

- I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal
- I am nothing
- It profits me nothing

Therefore, 1 Cor 14:1: Pursue love...!

When it comes to the church, our church, if we “do not have love” we are nothing but a profitless noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. This morning we pursue love.

Love is absolutely essential for our being, doing, and operating as the church of God's intention - - love first towards God and also towards each other.

We have been created in the image and likeness of God, who is love (1 John 4:8,16) with the potential for love by God's design unlike any other creature. It was a potential that was constrained by sin. But we have been set free from the bondage of sin and death (Rom 7 and 8) and our potential for love has now been enlivened and enabled in the new nature that God has already caused to be born in us in our new birth in Christ (2 Cor 5:17; 1 Peter 1:3...).

We who were formerly dead in our transgressions and sins (Eph 2) have been made alive and the life that we know live is **able to love** with the love of Jesus and His Spirit who indwells us. We have within us, in Christ, the power to love, a power that the unredeemed (those without the Spirit of God dwelling in them) do not have.

As the great Hollywood Spiderman quote goes, “With great power comes great responsibility.” Hollywood stole that one from God.

**Luke 12:48b** - ... **From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.**

We stand able and obligated to abide by the royal law of love (James 2:8) because God has already moved towards us in the law of liberty (James 2:13) setting us free from the bondage of sin that separated us from God and causing us to be born again (1 Peter 1:3) with a new nature, the nature of His original intention, the nature of love, His love. We have moved from the tarnished image bearers of fallen man constrained from true life and true love, to the restored image bearers of redeemed man enabled to true life and true love by His "once for all" work on the cross and His ongoing life-giving and love-enabling presence within us -- the Holy Spirit.

If we succeed in organizing a church according to the Biblical principles but do not love, we are nothing – at least nothing like God intended. So today we look at, better, we pursue love. We seek to understand it, know it in us, and live it out of us. We put love in its proper place: first.

#### **4. Understand Love**

What is love? The Scriptures would have us know love not only as an action but also as a thing – a reality. Not only do we know love as a verb but as a noun. Really I think we are best served to first ask, "Who is love?"

##### **a) Clear Statement #1 – 1 John 4:8b**

"...for **God is love.**"

Not God loves... indicating a type of action God does, but God is love indicating His very nature! John's statement, "...God is love" expresses God's nature. What is nature?

Nature: **1 a** : the inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing  
**: ESSENCE b** : **DISPOSITION, TEMPERAMENT** <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nature>

God's nature is love! Love is God's nature! What is love? The answer is God. If you come to know God, you will come to know love. If you see God, you are seeing love.

Let's look at another clear statement on love. In 1 John 4:10 John explains love the noun by love the verb.

##### **b) Clear Statement #2 – 1 John 4:10**

**1 John 4:10**

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

#### ***(6) Comment on 1 John 4:10***

##### **(a) Regarding Propitiation**

- Erickson: "Propitiation. A reference to the idea that Christ's atonement satisfies the wrath of God." P. 135 Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology.
- Erickson: "Wrath of God. God's opposition to and hatred of evil together with his intention to punish it." p. 184, *ibid*.

**(b) How love is NOT to be understood**

We are not to know love by our action toward Him. Love is when I... No. That may be the natural way of first thinking about God, but it is not how we must understand the supernatural God.

**(c) How love IS to be understood**

We ARE to know love by God's action toward us. Love is understood "in" God's action towards us – specifically in His sending of His Son to make atonement for our sins and thereby satisfy God's righteous wrath. With our sin no longer separating us from God He has brought us near to Him in more than a little hug and a trite, "I love you." He has officially and effectively made a new covenant with us accepting us for all eternity as His legal adopted sons and daughters giving us even a down payment on our future inheritance in the person of Christ's indwelling Spirit.

**That's how we are to understand love!**

Let's read 1 John 4:7-end. Listen to God explain love. With this we begin to understand love and our obligation as the beloved of God to love one another in character with the new creature we are in Christ. To be the church of God's intention we must understand that God's intention and His very nature is love. But we must not only understand love in God, we must also

**5. Know Love in Us**

What is it to know love in us? It is ...

**a) That we recognize love in us**

*(6) Not in feelings*

*(7) But in fact*

**(a) The Fact of Christ/God/Love in Us**

**(b) The Fact of Who You Are In Christ**

(i) I have died and my life is hidden in Christ...

**b) That we know what's love and what's not**

Love has many faces; many of them don't look like love at first glance; and many more that do look like love are really non-love in love's clothing. It is confusing.

*(6) Example of Love that Doesn't Look Like Love*

(a) "Get behind Me Satan!"

*(7) Example of Non-Love that Looks Like Love*

(a) **Discipline/Rebuke Withheld**

Sure sweaty, whatever you want. Would you like a sandwich while you play catch on the freeway, holding my sharpest kitchen knife? This is not love it is foolishness.

Sunapee tired parents – "Be careful walking down the stairs in your flippers." This is not love it is exhaustion.

(b) **The permissive parent (Eli with his sons)**

Heb 12:6 -- FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. Cf. Psalms 119:75; Prov 3:12; Rev 3:19

*(8) Love seeks its target's best according to God*

(a) **1 Cor 13**

That is love! We must know it in us! But recognizing that it is in us in Christ and His indwelling Spirit is even not enough. To put love in its proper place we must also...

**6. Live Love out from Us**

How Love Goes Out from Us

**a) In Worship towards God**

We love God in worship as we seek His best by giving Him the glory due His name.

**b) In Mission towards World**

We love those outside the church when we seek their best according to God which is that they would come to know God for who He is.

**c) In Nurture towards Each Other**

Our focus ...

*(6) Redeemed man loves by...*

(a) **Being patient with others**

Patient – this is an adjective describing love and could mean “long-tempered,” i.e., slow to get angry. See M&M p. 524.

When the old/natural man in you runs out of patience and you feel impatient, it is at that time that the love of God in you calls out patience seeking God's best for the ‘test.’ I call the one towards whom you feel impatient ‘the test’ because the one who tries your natural patience can be used by God to “test” -- to manifest your impatience and refine your godly patience.

Who is pressing your patience in your church family right now? God and love, would have you exercise love via patience towards that person. They are after all a work in progress coming from a different set of life circumstances having been shaped by a different set of influences, holding a different set of misunderstandings than your own misunderstandings.

Some of you are impatient. Impatient with a situation, impatient with someone else in the church, impatient with me.

If we are to be the church of God's intention we must love each other with the love God demonstrated to us in Christ and that love is patient.

Let's take another. Redeemed mankind loves by...

**(b) Being kind to each other**

[Ephesians 4:32](#) -- Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Love that expresses itself in kindness seeks to bring God's best to another person whether in word or deed.

(i) Kindness in Speech/Word

*(a) No Gossip*

Don't slip into natural mindedness and call gossip love.

Gossip is the gift of dung

Bart's piles of grass. I saw them as a gift but they were nothing but piles of dog dung thinly disguised to get a good laugh at the expense of gullible kid brother.

If Andy goes to Betty and speaks about Zelda in such a way that the Betty thinks less of Zelda, Andy

has just covered a pile of the stuff with grass and given it to Betty. Isn't that kind? Betty is holding Andy's words about Zelda and it is becoming apparent as to what they are but there is no good solution at hand.

And unlike my example of the pile of grass ... once you have some negative words in your mind about another person, especially those told you in confidence, you can't just wash your hands and be done with it. Those words live on in your mind and effect your understanding of that person. Even if you question the validity of the negative words, you still wonder if they are not possibly partially true.

**Stone Harbor is a no gossip zone.**

Brother's and sisters in Christ, it is not kind and it is not love to speak with on person about a 3<sup>rd</sup> party that in any way lowers that person.

Our words are to be used in love to build each other up not to tear each other down. See Ehp 4 and James 3 and 4. Love seeks a person's best according to God and does not listen to a person's worst according to man.

*(b) Yes Encouragement in Christ*

If we can't talk about each other what are we going to talk about? How about Jesus? Why don't we seek to know Jesus between us?

Hey, Tim good to see you. How are you? Well Johnny, funny you should ask. I've been studying God's word and He has been showing me that...I like where that discussion is going.

Hey, Sue, good to see you. How are you? Well Johnny, funny you should ask. I had an opportunity to serve the kids of the church and I was so blessed...

Hey Bob, good to see you. How are you? It has been one of the hardest weeks of my life. But I am trusting in God as James 1 encourages me and I know that somehow in this trial God is perfecting me and maturing me. Would you pray with me that His will would be accomplished...



Aren't those way better than this scenario where you meet Andy. "Hey Andy, good to see you. How are you doing?"

Andy: Well I'm not doing so good.

You: I'm sorry to hear that. What's up?

Andy: Well, in confidence, Zelda has been such a drip... Zelda this... Zelda that... If Zelda would only... But Zelda hasn't... Her behavior is so unchrist-like... So, I'm doing crummy thanks to Zelda. I do feel better having talked with you though, thanks.

The next time you see Zelda, you can't help but think of her as Andy had spoken of her. Some of it has got to be true. Where there is smoke there is a fire. Andy and you have both partnered in tearing Zelda down when God calls us to build each other up.

*(c) Dealing with Gossip*

If my brother ever asks me to pick up some piles of grass on the lawn again, I'll use a shovel and a hoe.

When someone starts to talk with you about another person, think, "I know this trick." Say, "I've come to see that God would have me build people up and being a sounding board for you about Zelda might make you feel better, but it probably won't truly help you and it will probably hurt her and my opinion of her. If this is an area of sin in Zelda's life Scripture would have you share your concerns directly with Zelda yourself, not tell them to me."

Mat 18:<sup>15</sup><sup>(M)</sup>If your brother sins<sup>(b)</sup>, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. Be kind, loving, but honest, seeking her best according to God.

I can tell that to adequately handle the topic of gossip in the church and how to deal with issues of sin we'll need a whole message. For our purposes here regarding the necessity of love in the church these brief comments will have to do. Talking negatively about a third party is not kind, it is not loving and it must not happen!

Stone Harbor church is a no gossip zone.

Got it?

(ii) **Kindness in Deed**

Love is kind. Kindness can express itself in word and in deed.

**2 Samuel 9:1**

[ *David's **Kindness** to Mephibosheth* ] Then David said, "Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him **kindness** for Jonathan's sake?" ...

If we are to be the church of God's intention we will operate in kindness bringing what we have in Christ to bear for the good of Mephibosheth, and Andy and Betty, and Zelda. As the redeemed of God with the love of Christ maturing in us we will demonstrate that love by patience, kindness, ...

**(c) Not being jealous of each other**

**(d) Not bragging**

**(e) Not being arrogant towards each other**

**(f) Not acting unbecomingly**

What is becoming? Christ-likeness. This says that love will manifest itself in becoming=Christ-like action.

**(g) Not seeking our own**

**(h) Not being provoked**

**(i) Not taking into account a wrong suffered**

This is an interesting expression of love as this is what the Lord calls us to when we have been wronged. We are not to count it. We are not to say, "He hurt me therefore I'm not going to love him." On the contrary, love does not take into account a wrong suffered but goes right on loving even the one who wronged them. Think of what Jesus prayed on the cross for those who crucified Him. Why should we love those who have caused our suffering? Because they deserve it? No, but because of the love of God who forgave us our wrongs we inflicted against Him.

**(j) Not rejoicing in unrighteousness**

**(k) Rejoicing with the truth**

**(l) Bearing, believing, hoping, enduring all things**

**(m) Not failing**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, love does not come naturally to our fallen human nature. But love is the natural fruit of the redeemed of the Lord. Christ in you should cause you to love God and each other. To the degree you are not loving God and each other you are operating in the flesh according to the dead man of sin – but God has in Christ redeemed you from that sin. You do not need, i.e., you are not bound to continue in any non-love. But it is easy to operate in the flesh that way. Even the mature can slip into thinking about other people in the church with a natural (unloving) mind. We all, without exception, must guard against operating according to the old man. We all, without exception, must think God's thoughts after Him and give our self to being the redeemed devoted sons of God He has restored us to be – those characterized by love.

### ***Conclusion:***

If we are to be the church of God's intention we must organize and set our structure and operate according to Biblical principals that we will outline next week. But if we have not love, we are nothing like He intended. Love, God's love, must be first!

Will you make it first today? Will you keep it first tomorrow?

If you have non-love towards another in this body then you are not thinking about them with the mind of Christ.

It has been rightly pointed out to me that I error in holding my kind of love that is not quite the same as God's love. I error in being my kind of kind that looks like kindness but is not God's kind of kindness. I do not want you to become like me in my error, I want all of us to become like Christ together. He is our light and our life and our example. Paul said, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

Christ Jesus rebukes, reproves, corrects... all in God's love. He is patient, kind, tender hearted.... all in God's perfect love. It is His Spirit who indwells us, it is Him who is being formed in us, it is into His likeness we are being transformed. Let us become like Him in love.

Today is a good day to lay aside any unloving patterns of the old man and let love be the rule of our life together – toward Him and towards each other.

As those who are studying James know, James calls this the "royal law" saying in James 2: <sup>8</sup>If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well."

We are still held to this royal law because God has made us able through our new birth in Christ and His indwelling Spirit of love to abide by it.

Let us love one another, for God is love and He has breathed His very own new true life into us that is love.

Have you been operating outside of love? Have you been impatient and unkind maybe talking about another person behind their back and using your words to tear people down instead of build them up? Or have you taken account of a wrong suffered instead of counted it an honor to suffer with Christ?

Move towards your brothers and sisters in love. If we don't we will be nothing but a clanging gong and a noisy cymbal.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1), but neither is there any glory toward God nor good towards man unless love is our rule.

Pray with me!

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