

# Passion and Compassion

IT'S A LOVE THING!

# Definitions (Thank you Merriam-Webster!)

- ▶ Passion
  - ▶ Intense, driving or overmastering feeling or conviction
  - ▶ Ardent affection
  - ▶ Love *of*...
- ▶ Compassion
  - ▶ sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it
  - ▶ Love *for*...

# Our Vision

- Where do we (Church & conference) need to improve?
  - Rededication to the “Greats”
    - “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19 – 20)
      - “Discipling” implies WE are “Disciples”!
      - Are WE? Really?
    - “Great Commandment” (Mark 12:30)
      - Loving the Lord with our entire being implies relationship with the Lord! (The PASSION!)
        - Are we in right relationship with the Lord? Really?
    - “Great Compassion” (Mark 12:31)
      - “Loving neighbor as yourself” implies we know true love! (The COMPASSION!)
      - Do WE? Really?

# Our Vision

- Reign of God STILL begins/ends with us  
*“missional”!*
  - We cannot address needs of community if we are not IN & ENGAGING the community!
  - “They” are “Us”!
  - We Are Family & We Are *Supposed* to LOVE Family!

# “Love” (“*agape*”)

What does it mean?

- “The self-giving love seen supremely in God’s love for the world and as a mark of the Christian life”\*
- What is the “connection”...where is the PASSION?
  - We are to “connect” with:
    - “all our heart” = thought & feelings
    - “all our soul” = life or breath
    - “all our mind” = intellectual thought
    - “all our strength” = that which gives us power (i.e. physical strength, beauty, wealth, talent, position, reputation, etc...)

\*Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms

# “Love” (“*agape*”)

What does it mean?

- “The self-giving love seen supremely in God’s love for the world and as a mark of the Christian life”\*
- Loving neighbor as self
  - Who is our “neighbor”? (Luke 10:29)
    - The one who is unloved and unliked
    - The one who is wounded and lost
    - The one who has not & can not
    - The one(s) who are overlooked, unseen, ignored, unheard & unwanted
    - BUT...

\*Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms

# “Love” (“*agape*”)

What does it mean?

- Loving neighbor as self
  - Maybe we do not love others right, because we do not love self right!
    - Low self-esteem masquerading as aloofness
    - Overabundance of self-love causing “blindness” to needs of others
    - So focused on “Number 1” we don’t realize we’re really “Number 3”...at least!

# Connecting Love to Vision

- “Loving God” requires engagement (“connection”) of our WHOLE BEING!
  - Real “Love” is feeling and doing!
    - Coming to know God’s love & responding
  - Real “Love” requires response!
    - Lip service without response reveals “disconnect”



# Connecting Love to Vision

- *“Loving neighbor as self”* requires sacrificial removal of personal agendas
  - Helping others nurtures respect for self
    - “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35)
  - Loving our neighbor reveals our love for God & self (“Great Compassion”)
    - Does our “love” elicit an sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it

# “Dis-Connected” vs. “Connected”

- “Disconnected”=selfish & superficial
  - Those who “know” and won’t “show”
  - Those “involved” but not “committed”
  - Those whose individual agenda is contrary to the “Greats”
  - Those who shine light on self rather than the “Light-giver”
  - Those looking to be entertained

# “Dis-Connected” vs. “Connected”

- “Connected”= self-less & seeking
  - Focused outward
  - Desiring to glorify God
  - Needing/Hungry for worship
    - An encounter with the Divine!

# Where are WE?

- Are WE “connected” or “disconnected” to the Lord?
- Do WE “love” (engage) the Lord with our WHOLE BEING?
  - Look for opportunities to worship?
  - Trust and obey the Lord?
  - Seek opportunities to serve selflessly?

# Where are WE? (cont.)

- Do we “love” (engage) the Lord with our WHOLE BEING?
  - Encouraging “family” who have “stumbled”?
  - Witnessing to “family” OUTSIDE the faith community?
  - Using our gifts (i.e. playing, singing, cooking, counting, counseling) for “family’s” sake?
  - Raising our “children” in the faith?

# The Process

How do the “Dis-Connected” become “Connected”?

- What would John Wesley say?
  - “...what is it to love God, but to delight in him, to rejoice in his will, to desire continually to please him, to seek and find our happiness in him, and to thirst day and night for a fuller enjoyment of him?”\*

\* Sermon #139 “On Love” preached in Savannah, GA (Feb. 20, 1736)

# The Process

How do the “Dis-Connected” become “Connected”?

- What would John Wesley say?
  - Embrace the concept of becoming outwardly-focused
    - “Christianity is essentially a social religion and...to turn it into a solitary religion is indeed to destroy it”\*
    - If we are truly “Christian” it cannot be strictly personal

\*Sermon #24 “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse Four (Oct. 22-26, 1740)

# The Process

## Where are “We”?

- What has the Spirit spoken to our soul lately? (Are we listening?)
- Can anyone, just by observing, discern WE are “connected”?
- Do we “love” hard enough to affect change in our community (inside & outside)? Are we willing to at least TRY?



# The Process

## Identifying the Issues

- Heart not invested in what Head acknowledges
  - We are not “loving” (engaging) with our ENTIRE being!
- Priority on “Self” & not “Others”
  - We are not truly “loving our neighbor as [our]self”!

# The Process

## Beginning to Fix It

- Fully Commit to Covenant Group
  - Relearn what it means to be in right relationship!
  - PEGS!
- Share in Equipping/Empowering Laity
  - LEGS!
- Fully Engage in Spiritual Discipline
  - Put in the work studying to show ourselves approved!

# The Process Continues

## “Excellence Breeds Excellence”!

Mark 12: 28b – 33

### ▶ Traits of a Vital Church

- ▶ Clear sense of purpose that is fully embraced by congregation
- ▶ Love of God, neighbor & self evidenced in outwardly-focused (missional) ministries (“Deep water fishing”!)
- ▶ Connected to our Connection (apportionments/supportive of other faith communities)
- ▶ Participation in “PEGS” & “LEGS”
- ▶ Nurturing (identifying, encouraging, equipping & empowering people in the ministry process)

# The Process Continues

## “Excellence Breeds Excellence”!

- ▶ Traits of a Church on the verge of becoming “Vital”
  - ▶ Efforts to pay apportionments and/or repay conference loans
  - ▶ Visionary leadership (clergy & laity) that just needs a “boost”
  - ▶ Entrepreneurial opportunities with not-for-profit community agencies
  - ▶ Discernment of the District leadership (primarily based on DS & DBoL input)

# Means for Identifying/Prioritizing Churches for MCC Process

