

Lesson 1 Overcoming Our Fear Commentary Material 1

6:1-40 the Judgeship of Gideon

1-6 the Israelites Are Oppressed by the Midianites

[1](#) the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD—Having failed to learn from previous experiences, the Israelites again fell away from God. Their new sins were followed promptly by fresh judgments.

[2](#) the hand of Midian—The Midianites had suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of Moses and a picked army of Israelites ([Num. 31:1-18](#)). No doubt the memory of that national disaster fired their desire for revenge. Midianites were wandering herdsman (i.e., seminomadic) related to the Israelites from Abraham's wife Keturah and by marriage to Moses ([Exod. 2:16-21](#)). Their homelands were normally in the desert areas south and east of Edom and Moab. Their destructive plunderings of cultivated farmlands in Palestine here described were similar to those of the bedouins throughout biblical history, whenever they were strong enough to penetrate the outer defenses of those living a settled agricultural life. Unless the defenders had a clear superiority of force, or unless a workable treaty could be reached and enforced, these desert-living, nomadic tribes would return annually after the crops were planted and would remain until the harvest season to fatten their flocks and replenish their stores of food by plunder. Not only property but lives were endangered; hence many of the Israelites took to living at this time "in caves and dens" (cf. [6:2](#)) of which there was and is an abundance in the Palestinian hills. This flight probably made it even easier for the Midianites to raid the fertile valleys and upland farms. To further terrify the Israelites, the Midianites were now using camels in an organized, military fashion for the first time in history. They had no defense or counter-weapons against these great, charging beasts. The horde of Midianites and their relatives, the Amalekites, that overran large portions of Canaan at this time were a terrifying scourge upon the Israelites and a threat to the "settled" way of life then developing in Palestine.

[4](#) Gaza—the Philistine city near the southwest border of Judah.

7-10 a Prophet Appears and Rebukes Them

[8](#) the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel—God's prophet reminded the people that God had performed mighty acts on their behalf, and told them that they needed to worship him alone. This prophet opened the people's eyes to their disobedience and to the fact that the calamity upon them was due to their unfaithfulness. This was the first time God sent a prophet to rebuke the people. This became a regular occurrence in the monarchy period.

11-24 Gideon's Call

[11](#) there came an angel of the LORD—He seemed to Gideon to be just a traveler, walking staff in hand ([6:21](#)), who sat down in the shade of a large oak tree to take a rest. They are soon discussing the number one topic of the times, the oppression of the Israelites by the Midianites. The angel of the Lord began urging Gideon to rise to the occasion on behalf of his country. On the relationship between the angel of the Lord and God himself, see comments on [Exodus 3:2](#) and on [Judges 2:1](#).

(Exodus 3:2 [2](#) the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire—In Scripture an angel usually precedes a theophany ([Josh. 5:13-6:12](#); [Judg. 13:3-8](#)) or accompanies a divine revelation ([Gen. 18:1-33](#); [19:1](#)). Fire is elsewhere used to illustrate God's presence. When God made the covenant with Abraham, "a flaming torch" appeared ([Gen. 15:17](#)); and when God descended to make the Sinaitic covenant, fire and smoke describe the divine presence ([19:18](#)). When the Holy Spirit came to the church at Pentecost, flames of fire were seen ([Acts 2:3](#)).)

Ophrah—a city in the tribe of Manasseh, the district belonging to Abiezer ([Josh. 17:2](#)). If this town is to be identified with Afula (Aharoni), it is located eight miles northwest of Beth-shean. Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress—This clause depicts clearly the extent of the Midianite oppression: Gideon was threshing by hand a small amount of grain inside a winepress so he would not be seen by the Midianites and have his grain taken away from him.

[13](#) Oh my Lord—In calling his guest "my Lord" (Heb. *ʾadōnī*) he uses a common term of respect, such as "sir." It does not mean he recognized that it was the Lord God. if the LORD be with us, why then is all of this befallen us?—Gideon's response reflects the unthinking attitude of the Israelites generally, who have not perceived the steadfastness of the Lord's love for

them, or the consequences of their falling away from the faithful worship of him.

[14](#) the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might ... have not I sent thee?—The command and the promise apparently failed to convince the reluctant Gideon of the source of the promise (Cundall). This is supported by his claim of weakness and the insignificance of his "family" or "clan" (Heb. *elep*).

[17](#) Even when he was assured that, with God's help, he would rout the Midianites, Gideon still hesitated, wishing to be better assured that the mission was really from God. He resembles Moses in his desire for a sign; and on behalf of both men it may be said that God had not been much in evidence in their lives, amid all the general corruption of public and private life. Their desire to be fully convinced that they were really in the divine presence is therefore understandable.

[18](#) Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I ... bring forth my present—The word for "gift" or "present" (Heb. *minḥāh*), as seen in [Leviticus 2](#), represents a ereal offering. Such a present could be made to a human king ([2 Chron. 17:11](#)), and could include a wide range of objects.

[19](#) Gideon ... made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour—See comments on [Genesis 18:6-8](#). Gideon prepares a sumptuous feast for the divine visitor. If ephah is understood rightly, it is more than a bushel ("Weights and Measures," *NBD*). The miraculous fire that consumed it and the vanishing of the stranger, not by walking but as a spirit in the fire, filled Gideon with awe, and at this moment the nature of the visitor is perceived (Cundall). A sense of unworthiness fills the heart of every fallen man at the thought of God, along with fear of his wrath; and this feeling was heightened by a belief held by all Hebrews in ancient times that whoever saw the angel of the Lord, or the Lord himself, face to face would surely die. (See [13:22](#); [Gen. 16:13](#); [Exod. 20:19](#); [33:20](#); [Isa. 6:5](#).) The acceptance of Gideon's sacrifice was a sign of the acceptance of his person in the direct confrontation; but the ancient Hebrew feeling about the awesomeness of God required an express assurance of the divine blessing, given in some way we cannot further explain, to restore Gideon's peace of mind.

25-32 Gideon Destroys the Altar of Baal

[25](#) the same night ... the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock—The text of this verse is complex and may have suffered in transmission. It is not clear whether two bulls were involved, one to help destroy the altar and the other for sacrifice, or whether his father's second bull (so RSV, NIV, NASB) would serve both functions. throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath—standing upon his property and used by the family, although apparently used also by fellow townsmen. If there is to be a national reform it must start with the leader's family and his neighbors. cut down the grove that is by it—lit. "the Asherah," the Canaanite fertility goddess and consort of Baal (cf. comments on [Deut. 7:5](#)).

[28-32](#) Gideon's radical action created quite a stir in the community, with some calling for his death ([6:30](#)). Joash, Gideon's father, defends his son, suggesting that if Baal was indeed God, he could defend himself ([6:31](#)). It appears that Joash must have been convinced that Gideon's conduct was motivated by Yahweh. Jerubbaal—Gideon's nickname that resulted from this episode; it means "let Baal contend with him."

33-35 the Marauding Midianites Return

[33](#) the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered ... and pitched in the valley of Jezreel—The confederated hordes of desert folk, crossing the Jordan River to make a fresh invasion of Canaan, encamped in the plain of Esdraelon (also known as the valley of Jezreel). It might have been expected that the raid would have come from the Negeb, or southern Canaan, rather than from the Transjordan, which would involve fording the Jordan. Perhaps the element of surprise was intended by the marauding coalition.

[34](#) the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon—called in this sudden emergency into the service of his country, he was endowed by God with wisdom and energy equal to the task, which was full of dangers and difficulties. Under the compelling power of the Spirit of the Lord, Gideon first summons his own clan and tribe, and then the neighboring tribes; the call to arms was enthusiastically answered by all. The expression "the Spirit of the LORD" is very common in the book of Judges and generally indicates that God was taking decisive action through the individual named (cf. [Judg. 14:6](#); [1 Sam. 10:10](#); [2 Sam. 23:2](#); [1 Chron. 12:18](#); [2 Chron. 24:20](#); [Ezek. 3:24](#)).

36-40 the Sign of the Fleece

[36](#) And Gideon said unto God—On the eve of a very risky military business Gideon sought to strengthen his confidence with a fresh assurance that he was in fact under a divine call to the weighty responsibilities of becoming the liberator of his people. The miracle of the fleece was a remarkable one—especially considering the heavy dews that fall in central Palestine. God's patience and grace were wonderfully shown in reversing the form of the miracle. Gideon himself ([6:39](#)) seems to have been conscious of the risk of incurring the displeasure of the Lord by his hesitancy and doubts; however, God bears with such weaknesses of his people. Seeking a sign is not necessarily bad. God offered King Ahaz a sign that he would deliver Jerusalem even when the king did not seek one ([Isa. 7:10-14](#)).

COMMENTARY Material 2

Old Testament: Based on the Classic Commentary of Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown.

5. THE DELIVERANCE BY GIDEON FROM THE OPPRESSION OF THE MIDIANITES ([6:1-8:32](#))

a. The defection of Israel ([6:1a](#))

[6:1a](#). The downward cycles (see the [sketch](#) near [2:11-15](#)) of apostasy (again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; cf. [3:7](#), [12](#); [4:1](#)) and deliverance continued in the case of Gideon whose judgeship receives the most extensive narration in the Book of Judges (100 verses comprising three chapters). The story of Samson is comparable, consisting of 96 verses in four chapters.

b. The distress under the Midianites ([6:1b-6](#))

[6:1b-6](#). The seven years of oppression under the hands of Midianites was divine chastening for Israel's idolatry and evil practices. This relatively brief period of oppression was sandwiched in between two 40-year periods of peace ([5:31](#); [8:28](#)). The Midianites were descendants of Abraham and Keturah ([Gen. 25:1-2](#)) and were defeated by Israel during the wilderness wanderings ([Num. 22:4](#); [25:16-18](#)). They were a nomadic people who came from near the Gulf of Aqabah and ranged throughout the Arabah and Transjordan, apparently at this time subduing the Edomites, Moabites,

and Ammonites as they crossed the Jordan into Canaan as far north as the Jezreel Valley ([Judges 6:33](#)), and as far south and east as Gaza ([v. 4](#)), perhaps moving westward across the Jezreel Valley and southward along the coastal plain.

The strength of Midianite oppression forced the Israelites to hide themselves and their produce in mountain clefts, caves, and strongholds. However, this was not a continual occupation (like the preceding one of the Canaanites) but a seasonal invasion at harvesttime, whenever the Israelites planted their crops. The Midianites' major goal was the appropriation of the crops for themselves and their animals. But the cumulative effect of these invasions on Israelite agriculture and food cycles was devastating. Midianite allies included the Amalekites (from south of Judah; cf. [3:13](#)) and other eastern peoples, a general term for the nomads of the Syrian desert, possibly including some Ammonites and Edomites. On these annual predatory invasions, in typical nomadic style, the oppressors camped on the land in such numbers and with such devastation that they were compared to swarms of locusts (cf. [7:12](#)). The Midianites and their allies traveled on innumerable camels (cf. [7:12](#)) whose range of distance and speed (as high as 100 miles per day) made them a formidable long-range military threat. This is the first reference to an organized raid using camels (cf. [Gen. 24:10-11](#)). The impoverishment that came to Israel drove her to cry out to the LORD for help. This cry does not seem to have been an indication of repentance for sin because they apparently were not aware of the moral cause behind the enemy's oppression until the Lord sent a prophet to point this out (cf. [Judges 6:7-10](#)).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

The deliverance by Gideon ([6:7-8:27](#))

(1) THE CENSURE OF ISRAEL BY A PROPHET.

[6:7-10](#). The LORD... sent an unnamed prophet (the only prophet mentioned in the book besides the Prophetess Deborah) to remind Israel of her covenant obligations to the LORD, who had delivered them from Egypt

(cf. [Ex. 34:10-16](#); [Deut. 7](#); [Judges 3:5-6](#)), not to worship the gods of the Amorites. The prophet rebuked them for their continued disobedience (But you have not listened to Me [God]). This message is similar to that from the Angel of the Lord at Bokim (cf. [2:1-3](#)).

(2) THE CALL OF GIDEON BY THE ANGEL OF THE LORD ([6:11-24](#)).

[6:11-12a](#). The story of Gideon is introduced not by an affirmation that “God raised up a deliverer named Gideon,” but rather by a narration of *how* God raised him up. Gideon’s call or commission resulted from a confrontation with the Angel of the LORD (who is “the LORD,” [v. 14](#); cf. [comments](#) on [2:1](#)), who appeared to him as a sojourning stranger and sat down under the oak in Ophrah. Since Gideon’s father Joash was an Abiezrite (a clan of Manasseh, [Josh. 17:2](#)), this Ophrah was not the place located in Benjamin but rather a northern site possibly near the border of Manasseh in the Jezreel Valley. Possible site identifications are el-Affula (six miles east of Megiddo) or et-Taiyiba (Hapharaim, eight miles northwest of Beth Shan). Gideon’s act of threshing wheat in a winepress reflected both his fear of discovery by the Midianites and the smallness of his harvest. Normally wheat was threshed (the grain separated from the wheat stalks) in an open area on a threshing floor (cf. [1 Chron. 21:20-23](#)) by oxen pulling threshing sledges over the stalks.

[6:12b-13](#). The Angel’s introductory remark affirmed the Lord’s presence with Gideon (you is sing.) and described Gideon as a mighty warrior (“mighty man of valor”; KJV; the words *gibbôr ḥāyil* are also applied to Jephthah, [11:1](#); and to Boaz, [Ruth 2:1](#)). Though this description may have been spoken in satire (at this point Gideon was anything but a mighty warrior!), it probably reflected Gideon’s potentiality through divine enablement, as well as expressing his notable rank in the community.

Gideon’s initial response ignored the singular pronoun “you” ([Judges 6:12](#)), for he replied, If the LORD is with us (pl. pronoun). Gideon questioned the divine promise in view of his people’s present circumstances. He correctly concluded, however, that the LORD had put them into the hand of Midian.

[6:14](#). “The Angel of the LORD” ([vv. 11-12](#)) now spoke as the LORD and commissioned Gideon to Go... and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. The words the strength you have perhaps assumed the divine presence previously mentioned ([v. 12](#)).

[6:15](#). But, Gideon objected, My clan is the weakest... and I am the least. This objection might have stemmed from typical Near-Eastern humility, but perhaps it also reflected a good amount of reality.

[6:16](#). God’s reassurance reaffirmed His presence with Gideon (I will be with you) and the ease with which he would accomplish victory over the Midianites (as if they were but one man).

[6:17-21](#). Gideon requested a sign to confirm the Lord’s promise. This request was granted (cf. [v. 21](#)). Meanwhile Gideon’s uncertainty regarding the exact identity of his supernatural Visitor prompted him to offer typical Near-Eastern hospitality. The word for offering or gift (*minḥâh*), which he proposed to set... before the Visitor, could refer to a freewill offering in Israel’s sacrificial system, or it could refer to tribute offered as a present to a king or other superior (cf. [3:15](#)). The large amount of food prepared by Gideon—goat’s meat and broth, and bread made from an ephah (one-half bushel) of flour—reflected both his wealth in a destitute time and the typical excessiveness of Near-Eastern hospitality. He no doubt planned to take the leftovers home for his family! But the Angel of the LORD touched the food offering with the tip of His staff and consumed it by fire, thus providing the sign Gideon had requested ([6:17](#); cf. [Lev. 9:24](#); [1 Kings 18:38](#)). Then the Angel... disappeared.

[6:22-24](#). Gideon’s consternation probably reflected his fear of impending death because of seeing the divine presence (cf. [Ex. 33:20](#)). When the LORD assured Gideon he was not going to die... Gideon built an altar and named it the LORD is Peace.

(3) THE DESTRUCTION OF BAAL’S ALTAR BY GIDEON ([6:25-32](#)).

[6:25-26](#). The LORD gave Gideon a test of obedience. If Gideon was to deliver Israel from the Midianites, he must not only achieve military victory

over the enemy but also must remove the cause of idolatry which initially led the Lord to give His people over to the Midianites (cf. [v. 1](#)). Therefore God commanded Gideon to destroy his father's altar to Baal with its accompanying Asherah pole (a cult object probably representing Asherah, Ugaritic goddess of the sea; cf. [comments](#) on [3:7](#)). Gideon was then to construct a proper kind of altar to the LORD, kindle a fire with the wood of the Asherah pole, and offer one of his father's bulls (probably intended originally as a sacrificial animal for Baal) as a burnt offering to the Lord.

[6:27](#). Gideon's obedience to God's command should not be minimized by his use of 10... servants (dismantling a Canaanite altar was a massive task), or by the fact that he did it at night (the Baal-worshippers would obviously have prevented it if he had tried to do this during the day).

[6:28-32](#). The resultant hostility of the community against Gideon was defused by his father's sage advice. Their investigation of the overnight vandalism quickly implicated Gideon, whose execution they demanded. But Joash, perhaps repentant and inspired by his son's remarkable actions, wisely proclaimed, If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself. Perhaps this implied that the people should not overstep Baal's prerogative of self-defense (cf. Elijah's irony about Baal, [1 Kings 18:27](#)). This wise advice appealed to the people who then called Gideon by the name of Jerub-Baal, meaning Let Baal contend. Though they apparently applied the name derogatively, it might have later assumed an honorable signification as a witness against Baal's inability to defend himself (cf. [Judges 7:1](#); [8:29](#); and [comments](#) on Jerub-Baal in [9:1](#)).

(4) THE PREPARATION OF GIDEON FOR BATTLE.

[6:33-35](#). Gideon's commission by the Lord seems to have preceded the next (and final) annual invasion of the Midianites and their allies. They crossed... the Jordan River not far south of the Sea of Kinnereth and camped in typical Bedouin fashion in the rich agricultural area of the Jezreel Valley. The Lord's deliverance of His people through Gideon began as the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon (cf. [3:10](#); [11:29](#); [13:25](#); [14:6](#), [19](#); [15:14](#)), providing divine enablement through the Holy Spirit's personal

presence. Gideon immediately began to muster men, summoning his Abiezrite clan (cf. [6:11](#), [24](#)) with a trumpet and the rest of the tribe of Manasseh along with the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali by means of messengers.

(5) THE SIGNS CONCERNING THE FLEECE OF GIDEON.

[6:36-40](#). Gideon's apparent lack of faith in seeking a miraculous sign from God (cf. [Matt. 12:38](#); [1 Cor. 1:22-23](#)) seems strange for a man who is listed among the heroes of faith ([Heb. 11:32](#)). In fact Gideon already had a sign from God at the time of his commission ([Judges 6:17](#), [21](#)). It is noteworthy, however, that Gideon was not using the fleece to discover God's will, for he already knew from divine revelation what God wanted him to do ([v. 14](#)). The sign related to a confirmation or assurance of God's presence or empowerment for the task at hand. God condescended to Gideon's weak faith and saturated the wool fleece with dew, so much so that Gideon wrung out... a bowlful of water. Perhaps Gideon had second thoughts about the uniqueness of this event since the surrounding threshing floor might naturally dry before the fleece. So he requested the opposite—This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew. God patiently did so, and Gideon was reassured to continue his assignment.

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Life-Sharing Lesson 1—Overcoming Our Fear Judges 6:1-40

1. When was a time in your life when you were very afraid of making a change, but the change actually worked out in your favor?

In fourth grade I moved to New York and was placed in the group of kids with the B class rating. I did so well in class, the teachers realized I should have been in with the A group class rating. After a month in being in my class, I did not want to change and have to make new friends and a new teacher all over again. I didn't have much choice so I went. Some of the kids in that new class became great friends of mine through high school.

Judges 6:1-40 New International Version (NIV) **Gideon**

6 The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. ² Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. ³ Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. ⁴ They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. ⁵ They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. ⁶ Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help.

⁷ When the Israelites cried out to the LORD because of Midian, ⁸ he sent them a prophet, who said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ⁹ I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all [your](#) oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. ¹⁰ I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.”

¹¹ The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. ¹² When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.”

¹³“Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

¹⁴The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” ¹⁵“Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

¹⁶The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.” ¹⁷Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. ¹⁸Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the LORD said, “I will wait until you return.”

¹⁹Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah^[a] of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak. ²⁰The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so. ²¹Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. ²²When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!”

²³But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.”

²⁴So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. ²⁵That same night the LORD said to him, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old.^[b] Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole^[c] beside it. ²⁶Then build a proper kind of^[d] altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second^[e] bull as a burnt offering.”

²⁷So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.

²⁸In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar!

²⁹They asked each other, “Who did this?” When they carefully investigated, they were told, “Gideon son of Joash did it.”³⁰The people of the town demanded of

Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.”

³¹ But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, “Are you going to plead Baal’s cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.” ³² So because Gideon broke down Baal’s altar, they gave him the name Jerub-Baal^[f] that day, saying, “Let Baal contend with him.”

³³ Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. ³⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. ³⁵ He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.

³⁶ Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—
³⁷ look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” ³⁸ And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.

³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.” ⁴⁰ That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

2. Why does Gideon appear afraid to accept the title in verse 12 , “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior?”

Gideon didn’t see himself as any great warrior. He was out there where he was in order to hide himself from the enemy. His concept of a mighty warrior was someone who had the blessing of God on his life doing great things. It was obvious from his circumstances that things were not going well in his favor. Life around him was a joke thanks to the Midianites.

3. What are some things you think the Lord would call you, that you are reluctant to accept?

God calls us saints of God. God calls us a holy priesthood, a royal nation. Rarely do I declare that I am part of a holy priesthood outside of the church building. I don't ever recall telling anyone outside the church that I belong to a royal nation.
1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)⁹ *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

4. Why does Gideon use his weaknesses as a reason to justify staying right where he is?

Gideon is not willing to take on the challenge the Angel of the Lord is trying to give to him. He is either afraid of change, afraid of the consequences of saying yes, or afraid of taking the risk of leading an uprising against a superior force. He wants someone else to do the job.

5. It is obvious in verses 20-22 that Gideon has had a supernatural event take place in his life. Why is he still afraid to carry out God's command to go and tear down the altar of Baal and the Asherah pole?

Having seen fire come out of rock would have gotten my attention. It's one thing to see something out in the fields when you are alone. It's another thing to put yourself intentionally in harm's way. Gideon knew that he would come under attack if he tried to desecrate Baal's temple by tearing it down. He was not interested in committing suicide

6. Why is it with us, that God's past deliverance does not keep us from having fear the next time around?

Seeing a supernatural event does not always endow us with supernatural power to handle the next situation that comes into our lives. No matter what God does for us, we still have to walk by faith and not by sight. Gideon was literally being asked to lay his life on the line in order to be obedient to God. That's something we all

might find a little hard doing. There are some things we learn from God only through going through certain experiences in life. The disciples had seen Jesus do all kinds of healings. They had seen him feed 5,000 people with 2 fish and five loaves. Yet they were not prepared for him walking on the water. **Matthew 14:22-33 (NIV)**²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,²⁴ but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.²⁵ During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

7. What do you think are the greatest fears in our church about possibly merging with Calvary/Glenville?

1. The fear of losing our personality as a congregation.
2. The fear of losing our building and the memories attached to it.
3. The fear of not being fully accepted by the other congregation.
4. The fear of not knowing what all is going to happen, and not knowing what my role is going to be.
5. The fear of losing some relationships with people who may not go over in a new congregation.

6. *The fear of things not working out, but having nothing to go back to.*
7. *The fear of inconvenience that comes along with change.*

8. What do you think are the greatest fears about losing one pastor at Glenville or if you are at Calvary, what's the greatest fear at Calvary about going ahead with one pastor instead of three?

1. Probably the greatest fear is which pastor will it be. Each person has something they like about each pastor, but there is usually a stronger bond with one than with the other two. Which ever pastors leaves, it means a loss of gifts from the church and a change in the dynamics of the church. 2 people cannot do what 3 people were doing without other people stepping up to feel the gap. Ministry today is much more demanding of pastors than it has been in the past. Specialization is almost a requirement in a growing congregation.

2. For Calvary, it will be even more apparent with one person trying to do a job in inner city ministry that is virtually impossible to do alone. One of the advantages of three people is that the persons can be in 3 places at once. One person can only be in one place at a time. No one person has the gifts sufficient to cover as many areas as urban ministry requires. Calvary would have to have a lay pastor ministry instituted immediately if it is to continue moving forward.

9. Why do you think God would consider having two congregations merge to become one, if God knew it would provoke fear among God's people?

Almost everything God does that is fresh and new develop's fear in God's people because change means risk. Whether its Abraham and Sara leaving for a place they did not know or the children of Israel facing enemies in the promise land, fear has to be conquered in order to follow God. What we fail to sometimes realize is that in God's sight, churches are already merged because there is but one body of Christ. God's goal is to spread the kingdom of God, and to change us to make us look more like Jesus Christ. Fear is a tool that Satan uses, to keep us from attempting to do great things for God.

10. We are at the point in which, no one can say, God said “for the churches to merge”, or God said, “for the churches not to merge.” Do you think, we should do what Gideon did in placing a fleece or test before God to discern God’s will? Why or why not?

Our situation is somewhat different from Gideon in that Gideon already knew for certain what he was suppose to do. He was to go and fight the Midianites. He was looking for confirmation for what the Lord had told him to do. The problem with putting out a fleece before the Lord is that it does not confirm what we may be asking. We are told not to put the Lord to a test. Suppose God had wanted to see if Gideon would go into battle without knowing what the outcome would be. God could have had the fleece be the exact opposite of what Gideon had asked for.

Sometimes we can do the right thing for God, but the results still be disastrous. See the story of the Israelites. *Judges 20:18-42 (NIV) The Isrealites went to battle after being told by God to go and who to send first, only to suffer two humiliating defeats.* We are called to learn to discern the will of God by seeking counsel from other believers and leaders.

11. Does following God’s will mean there will be more stress or less stress as a result of our obedience?

*Following God’s will is never a guaranteed way to easy street. It may solve a problem for a moment, and yet create a whole new set of problems that we had not anticipated. We can only see a picture of the present, but God is working with eternity in mind. In Hebrews we love the early stories about deliverance by God in the first part of the chapter, but the end of the chapter does not suggest faith resulted in less stress. It says in **Hebrews 11:35-40 (NIV)***

³⁵ Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better

resurrection.³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.³⁷ They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated--³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

The increase or decrease in the stress factor is not an indication of our obedience to the will of God except in the situations in which God has allowed us to face punishment for our sins.

12. What pains will our church experience if we do not merge?

Although Glenville is a much more inclusive age group church, both churches are growing older. Some of the best givers in the church are in their 60's, 70's and 80's. Both churches are very weak in the 25 to 45 age bracket. Both churches will lose some of the momentum they currently have as they readjust to which ministries can continue and which ones will be curtailed from a loss of leadership at the top. Both churches will lose a couple of people, because some from Calvary may not be happy with the pastor that remains with them and they will leave Calvary, and some from Glenville may leave to go and be with the pastor at Calvary. The morale of the churches will suffer until they each grab a new vision of what God wants to do through them as separate institutions. Without a change in the makeup of the congregation in terms of givers churches, financial pressures will become more of a reality as people retire, go into nursing homes, and go home to be with the Lord. Both will continue to have pains associated with older buildings. Both congregations will have to move beyond blaming people in the congregation for why the new congregation was not created.

13. What pains will the new congregation experience if we do merge?

There will be a period of friction and adjustments as in a marriage when two people are brought together. People will have to deal with the loss of people who chose not to participate in the new congregation. The new congregation will have to move beyond the “us” and “them” way of thinking. It will have to move to “we” and “us” only. There will be pains centered around non-clergy staffing and salaries. There will be pain over bringing some groups together, and the decision to let some ministries cease to exist. There will be some pain in giving birth to new ministries.

14. What is the proper role of fear in our decision making process?

We should begin with the verse that tells us “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Are the steps we are taking to encourage people one way or the other acceptable in God’s sight. Our fear should be to not discern the will of the Spirit in our relationships to one another. We should not try to scare people into creating a new congregation. We should inspire one another to be the best we can be for God.

15. What does this passage tell us about the kinds of people God uses to do God’s will?

God uses ordinary people who recognize the job that God is calling them to do is bigger than themselves and that they need others to make things happen.

Life-Sharing Lesson 2- Reaching Out---A Different Church Growth Strategy
John 13:33-34

Commentary I John 13:33-34

"My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come."^{NIV} Jesus told his dear *children* (Greek, *teknia*, which connotes intimacy and fondness) that the time of his departure was nearing. Jesus would be going to the Father ([14:6](#), [28](#)) to rejoin him in the glorious fellowship that the Father and Son enjoyed from all eternity (see [17:5](#), [24](#)). The disciples would not be able to participate in that fellowship just yet.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."^{NKJV} Jesus would be gone, and they would not be able to join him for a while. In the meantime, they were to follow this commandment: *Love one another*. A command to love one another is not a new commandment; it had been mandated in the Old Testament ([Exodus 20:12-17](#); [Leviticus 19:18, 33-34](#); [Deuteronomy 5:16-21](#); [22:1-4](#); see also [Matthew 5:38-48](#); [7:12](#); [23:36-40](#); [Luke 10:25-37](#)). The newness of Jesus' command pertains to the new kind of love that Christians have for one another because they have each experienced the love of Christ.

Love for our neighbor consists of three things: to desire the greater good of everyone; to do what good we can when we can; to bear, excuse and hide other's faults.

John Vianney

Jesus commanded his followers to love one another "*as I have loved you*." This was revolutionary, for believers are called to love others based on Jesus' sacrificial love for them. Jesus was a living example of God's love, as we are to be living examples of Jesus' love. This love would be the mark of distinction: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."^{NKJV} One of the major themes in John's first letter is brotherly love (see [1 John 3-4](#)).

Jesus was going to die; he was going to be raised again; he was going to return to the Father. The disciples would be left in the world. Jesus gave them this one all-encompassing command—to love one another. Not only

would such love bring unbelievers to Christ; it would also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God. And such love, enabled by Jesus' love for them and by the coming Holy Spirit's power in them, would allow them to love all those for whom Christ died, and unite them with Christ spiritually. Then one future day, all believers would be united physically with their Savior.

LIFE APPLICATION

WHAT DO THEY SEE?

Jesus said that our Christlike love will show that we are his disciples. Do people see petty bickering, jealousy, and division in your church? Or do they know you are Jesus' followers by your love for one another? Love is more than simply warm feelings; it is an attitude that reveals itself in action. How can we love others as Jesus loves us? By helping when it's not convenient, by giving when it hurts, by devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own, by absorbing hurts from others without complaining or fighting back. This kind of loving is hard to do. That is why people notice when you do it and know you are empowered by a supernatural source. The Bible has another beautiful description of love in [1 Corinthians 13](#).

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – John.

Commentary II John 13:33-34

My children translates *teknia*, (“little children”; the diminutive of *tekna*, “children”). This term of love expressed Jesus’ concern for them. It is used only here by Jesus in this Gospel. John used it seven times in his first epistle ([1 John 2:1](#), [12](#), [28](#); [3:7](#), [18](#); [4:4](#); [5:21](#)), and Paul used it once ([Gal. 4:19](#)). Jesus announced once again that He would be gone and they would not be able to find Him (cf. [Matt. 23:29](#); [John 7:34](#); [8:21](#); [12:8](#), [35](#)). This was true in both His death and His Ascension.

[13:34-35](#). The 11 disciples would survive in His absence by obeying His example of love. The command is new in that it is a special love for other believers based on the sacrificial love of Jesus: As I have loved you, so you

must love one another. Christians' love and support for one another enable them to survive in a hostile world. As Jesus was the embodiment of God's love, so now each disciple should embody Christ's love. This love is a sign to the world as well as to every believer ([1 John 3:14](#)).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

Commentary III John 13:33-34

2. ([13:33-35](#)) Love— Jesus Christ, Death: Jesus' death demanded a new commandment. Again, note the reference to Jesus' death.

1. Jesus said that He was departing, that He would be with the disciples for only a little while longer. This was *the reason* Jesus had to give His disciples a new commandment. He was leaving. There were three reasons the new commandment on love was needed by every generation of believers.

- a. There are times when believers differ. There is always the danger of becoming critical, judgmental, censorious, and divisive. Remember, the disciples had just been arguing over who should receive the highest positions of authority in Jesus' new government (see note—' [Luke 22:24-30](#)). They had been struggling against each other and were highly critical and judgmental of each other. They had been deeply divided. The need for a new commandment and a new supernatural love existed then even as it does today.
- b. There are times when believers feel a keen need for Jesus' physical presence. Jesus knew this. That is the reason He said that the disciples would seek His presence. True, believers have the Holy Spirit, and He is the all-sufficient Comforter and the abiding Presence of God Himself. But being human, believers need another human presence with them. They need a brother or a sister, a genuine believer who loves them with the supernatural love of Jesus Himself. Jesus knew this, so He commanded believers to love each other. Believers are to meet the needs of each other for companionship and fellowship and for care and concern.
- c. There is the need for some supernatural force to hold the disciples together. Jesus' physical presence had been the cohesive force

that had held the disciples together when He was on earth. But once He had gone, His followers would need something else to hold them together. They must stay and serve together in one spirit and purpose. But how? The new commandment is the answer.

2. The new commandment is to love *as Christ loved*. Note several points.
 - a. This is not the old commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." It is not a human, neighborly love being commanded. This commandment is a new commandment being given to disciples only. It is the spiritual love that is to exist between believers as brothers and sisters and as servants of God who minister together.
 - b. The love being commanded is the love of Jesus Himself which is the love of God Himself, the love that can be shed abroad in our hearts only by the Holy Spirit (cp. [Romans 5:5](#)). It is not the normal physical love among human neighbors which is being commanded by God. It is a spiritual love that is wrought only by the Spirit of God.

Note: the distinctiveness of this love is that it is the love of Jesus Himself that dwells in the heart of the believer. Only the Spirit of God can put the love of Jesus within the heart of the believer. The Holy Spirit can create within the believer the love of Jesus Himself, the very same love which Jesus had while here on earth. The love of Jesus is ...

- the love of *spiritual being*: the love that causes one to hunger after union with God and God's people.
- the love of *spiritual life*: the love that shares the same life with all believers, both abundant and eternal life.
- the love of *spiritual union*: the love that binds and ties believers together in life and purpose.
- the love of *spiritual attachment or fellowship*: the love that shares needs and blessings and joys and sorrows and gifts together.

The Holy Spirit can create within the believer a love that can melt and mold his heart to the hearts of other believers. But note: it is a commandment; therefore, it is conditional. The Holy Spirit *can* create such a love, but believers *have to receive it*. When the love of Jesus dwells in the heart of a believer, several things happen. The believer has a love that *causes* him...

- to bind his life to the lives of other believers.
- to tie his life to the same purpose as other believers.

- to surrender his will and to be of the same mind as other believers.
 - to understand and feel with other believers.
 - to forgive other believers—always.
 - to sacrifice himself for other believers—always.
 - to seek the welfare of other believers before his own.
 - to deny self completely.
- c. The new commandment is the mark of a true disciple. The distinguishing mark of a true believer is not the normal human love of neighbors, not even the love of brothers and sisters or of husband and wife. It is the spiritual and supernatural love of Jesus Himself that dwells within the life of the believer. By this love shall all men know that a person is a *true* disciple of the Lord.

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – John.

Commentary 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient.^{NIV} *Because love is so important among the believers, Paul went on to describe that love in more detail. How does such love look when lived out in the lives of believers? First of all, love is patient.*

The expression "is patient" (makrothumei) is the opposite of being short-tempered.

Patience (sometimes translated "long-suffering" or "slow to anger") is an attribute of God (see [Exodus 34:6](#); [Numbers 14:18](#); [Romans 2:4](#); [1 Peter 3:20](#)). In many places, God's people are called upon to be patient (see, for example, [Ephesians 4:2](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#)).

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:22](#)).

What does patient love among believers look like? Such love bears with certain annoyances or inconveniences without complaint. Such love does

not lose its temper when provoked. Such love steadily perseveres. Without love, no matter how wonderful the gifts in the church, people will be impatient with one another, short-tempered, and irritable.

Before we rush to trivialize these words about love by assuming they can easily fit us, let's stop to consider that they actually describe God's character. These are not sugary claims. They are hard-edged descriptions of God's perfection-in-relationship. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle to write a breathtakingly beautiful description of the nature of God. Only God can put His character in us.

Neil Wilson

Love is kind.^{NIV} The Greek word translated "is kind" (*chresteuetai*) occurs only here in the New Testament. ("Kindness," *chrestotes*, occurs in [Galatians 5:22](#).) It probably means the same as a similar word (also translated as "kind") in [Ephesians 4:32](#): "Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you" (NLT). Kindness takes the initiative in responding generously to others' needs. The psalms and writings of the prophets say much about God's kindness ([Psalm 18:50](#); [Isaiah 54:8](#); [Jeremiah 9:24](#)). Because believers have received kindness, they ought to act with kindness toward others.

How does "kind love" look among believers? Such love is considerate and helpful to others. Kind love is gentle and mild, always ready to show compassion, especially to those in need. Without love, even the great gifts cannot be exercised with an eye to helping others.

It does not envy.^{NIV} "Envy" refers to strong jealousy of another person. The envious person desires what another person has. This seems to have been a particular problem in Corinth—those with "lesser" gifts envied those with "greater" gifts. The seed of envy can lead to seething anger and hatred. Those who are too busy envying each other's gifts are unlikely to be using their own gifts in loving service to God and others. Envy stagnates the church, causing the envious believers to remain self-centered and self-focused, feeling sorry for themselves, and not fulfilling their God-given role. When there is love, believers will gladly use whatever gifts they have been given to work together for the advance of God's kingdom. They will be glad that others have different gifts so that the entire job can get done.

LIFE APPLICATION

GENUINE LOVE

Society confuses love and lust. Often, so do believers. Unlike lust, God's kind of love is directed outward toward others, not inward toward one's self. It is utterly unselfish. This kind of love goes against natural inclinations. It is possible to practice this love only if God helps us set aside our own desires and instincts so that we can give love while expecting nothing in return. Thus the more we become like Christ, the more love we will show to others.

It does not boast, it is not proud.^{NIV} While some believers may have a problem with envy, those with the "greater" gifts might have a problem with boasting or pride. Again, it seems that this may have been a problem in Corinth. When spectacularly gifted believers begin to boast, they have directed their energy toward themselves. The gift becomes not a tool of service for the kingdom but a way of self-advancement. Such believers are proud. While some pride can be positive, this kind of pride takes credit for an undeserved gift. Gifted believers who are caught up in pride and boasting over their gifts are unable to serve. Without love, they may feel that by using their gifts, they are doing someone a favor, that others should be grateful to them, and that they are far superior.

13:5 It is not rude.^{NIV} The word translated "is rude" (*aschemonei*) refers to actions that are improper. Also translated as "love does not behave in an unseemly way," this means that love does not behave impolitely, discourteously, or crudely. Believers who use their gifts with love will be careful to act in a manner worthy of their calling before God. They will never humiliate others. This may also have been a problem in Corinth, especially in their worship services (see [11:2-16](#)).

It is not self-seeking.^{NIV} People who are self-seeking always want their own way. They are selfish, self-centered, wanting what they think is best for them. This is the opposite of love. Love (*agape*) looks out for others, seeks their best interests, willingly gives up its own for the sake of another. A self-seeking person may use his or her gifts but not with a serving attitude or a desire to build the kingdom. Instead, the gifts are only used if they can somehow benefit the self-seeking person. This is not God's way. Instead, because of love, the believers use their gifts to benefit others first, without "self" or selfish desires getting in the way.

It is not easily angered.^{NIV} The word for "easily angered" could also be translated "touchy," "irritable," or "sensitive to slights." Such people let things get on their nerves. One believer, in the process of exercising his or her gifts, may irritate another believer. These "easily angered" believers may not like the style or manner in which these others exercise their gifts. Or they may get easily angered at anyone who crosses them. This is not the way of love. When believers exercise their gifts in love, they will be able to give one another some latitude to follow God as they see fit. They will not let themselves be easily provoked over disagreements, but they will be able to always respond in a loving manner. This does not mean that anger is wrong, for anger can be a motivating factor when directed against wrongs or injustices. People who are "easily angered," however, are usually upset about personal affronts or minor issues. This stifles their service for God and the use of their gifts.

LIFE APPLICATION

IRRITABILITY

Paul says that true love isn't easily angered. Sometimes we're irritated or angered by others, and we don't know why. Not all irritability stems from sinful or selfish motives, although the irritable treatment of others surely is wrong. Much irritability comes from a love of perfection, a deep desire that programs, meetings, and structures be run perfectly. A desire to run things perfectly can erupt into anger at events or people who get in the way or ruin that desire. Those who are easily irritated need to remember that perfection exists only in God. We need to love him and our fellow Christians, not the visions we have for perfection here on earth.

It keeps no record of wrongs.^{NIV} *Believers must not allow themselves to become easily angered, and they must not keep record of wrongs. Such people will remember every offense against them as though it were written in a book and tallied. These "wrongs" are not sins that need to be dealt with in the congregation (such as that described in [chapter 5](#)) but minor offenses or misunderstandings between believers. Those who keep record of these wrongs and personal injuries will harbor resentment against other believers. Love, however, makes allowances for people's foibles and flaws and willingly forgets when wrongs were done. This frees all believers to grow and mature in Christ and to grow in their ability to serve and use their gifts. When mistakes are made, love overlooks them and allows believers to continue to serve with the gifts God has given them. God does not keep a record of believers' wrongs ([2 Corinthians 5:19](#)).*

13:6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.^{NIV} *When believers show love, they do not delight in evil, either by showing superior morality over it or by taking pleasure in another's fall. Love does not take pleasure in any kind of evil. Instead, love does the exact opposite—it rejoices with the truth. Through their relationship with Jesus Christ, believers possess the one and only truth ([John 14:6](#)). Those who love should remain untainted by evil. Instead, they ought to always seek truth, desire that truth win out, protect the truth, and proclaim the truth whenever possible.*

13:7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.^{NIV} *After explaining what love does not do ([13:4b-6](#)), Paul listed four positive attributes of*

love. First of all, love always protects. The word in Greek, stego, means "cover" or "hide by covering." This does not refer to hiding hurtful sin but to protecting someone from embarrassment, gossip, or any other such harm. When believers love one another, they refuse harmful gossip and protect one another from those who would try to inflict harm.

Love always trusts. This means both that love never loses faith and that it is willing to think the best of others. It does not mean that believers must be gullible, trusting everyone; instead, it means that they are willing to think the best as opposed to the worst of others. Love gives the benefit of the doubt. With real love, believers can deal with conflict lovingly. When everyone willingly thinks the best of everyone else, people are freed to be honest and open.

Love always hopes. Believers who love look forward, not backward. They seek for growth and maturity in the church, knowing that God is working in every person. They know that failure is not the end, and they trust in God who promises "that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" ([Romans 8:28](#) NRSV).

Love always perseveres. Believers who love are active and steadfast in their faith. They hold on, no matter what difficulties they face. Hardship and pain do not stop love. When believers persevere, they face suffering within the body. They face persecution. They hang on when the going gets tough. They strive to save their marriages despite disappointment, to continue to trust God despite setbacks, and to continue to serve God despite fear or sorrow. When believers truly persevere, nothing can stop them.

[13:8](#) Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.^{NIV} *All the spiritual gifts will eventually pass away, but love never fails. Love is permanent. There will be no end to love. Spiritual gifts will end because they are given to build God's kingdom. When Jesus Christ returns, the kingdom will be established and the "building up" will no longer be necessary. Therefore where there are prophecies ([12:10](#); [13:2](#)), they will cease. This gift was to be used for speaking the gospel message boldly, telling the future, and helping others grow in the Lord. One day, evangelism will no longer be necessary, all prophecies will be fulfilled, and all believers will be made perfect in Christ ([1 John 3:2](#)).*

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Corinthians.

Commentary 1 John 3:16-18

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.^{NRSV} To understand real love, believers need only to look at their Lord for the example. They can *know love by this, that he laid down his life* for all people. Christ's example shows believers that real love involves self-sacrifice, which, as [3:17-19](#) points out, must result in self-sacrificial actions.

Because he is the example, believers *ought to lay down [their] lives for one another*. They do this by becoming truly concerned about the needs of their Christian brothers and sisters and by unselfishly giving time, effort, prayer, and possessions to supply those needs.

Such an attitude would result in actually dying for a brother or sister if this were ever necessary. Believers' own lives should not be more precious to them than God's own Son was to him.

Tell me how much you know of the sufferings of your fellow men and I will tell you how much you have loved them.

Helmut Thielicke

LIFE APPLICATION

THE EPITOME OF LOVE

Clearly, John's readers were struggling with the topic of love—where to find it and how to rightly share it with others. (How else can we explain the lengthy sections of this epistle that address the issue?) As the ultimate example of love, John pointed to the cross, where Jesus "laid down his life for us." Then he added that believers should do the same for one another.

What does it mean to lay down your life for a brother or a sister? It means giving up your rights. It means seeking his best, even when it hurts or costs you deeply. It means putting her needs and interests above your own desires. Real love is an action, not a feeling. It produces selfless, sacrificial giving. The greatest act of love is giving oneself for others, serving others with no thought of receiving anything in return. Sometimes it is easier to say that we'll die for others than to truly live for them—that involves putting others' desires first. Jesus taught this same principle of love in [John 15:13](#). In what specific way could you "lay down your life" for a family member or friend today?

3:17-18 How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.^{NRSV}

These verses give an example of how believers can lay down their lives for others—to help those in need with their worldly goods. Seldom will believers be called upon to experience martyrdom for another. However, every day they will face needy people whom they ought to be willing to help if they have the resources to do so; most people have more than they need. This parallels James's teaching ([James 2:14-17](#)): Believers should be willing to help a *brother or sister in need*. Believers should respond to God's love for them by loving others, putting others' needs before their ownership of *the world's goods*.

Talk is cheap, so unsubstantiated claims (mere *word or speech*) are worthless. Faith not accompanied by love for others (shown *in truth and action*) is worthless. Anyone can claim to have faith, but if his or her lifestyle remains selfish and worldly, then what good are the words and speeches? True love expressed in action is the fruit of a living faith. If a person claims to be a believer, has possessions to offer, sees a brother or sister in need, and still refuses to help, that person shows a lack of God's love.

LIFE APPLICATION

LOVE IS A VERB

John dismissed the idea that God's love is a mere theoretical concept. He rejected the notion that sentimental words are an adequate expression of love to others. On the contrary, he argued, love must take action! Biblical love is a verb! It begins with feelings of concern and compassion for those in need and always results in tangible, substantial sacrifice. So easily we rationalize away biblical demands. In most of the world, our Christian brothers and sisters lack proper food, clothing, and jobs to live decent lives. [John 3:16](#) provides the best example of this truth: "God so loved the world that he gave . . ." Consider the people God has placed in your life and ask yourself, "What does an active love require me to do for them today?" Consider people around the world and ask what you can do to help.

Life-Sharing Lesson 2- Reaching Out---A Different Church Growth Strategy John 13:33-34

1. When you think of evangelism, what's the first thing that comes to your mind?
Somebody telling somebody else about Jesus.

2. What kinds of things attract people to a church?

The physical building; the pastors, the church's reputation in the community, the people who attend the church, the worship style, the location, the ministries of the church, the personality of the church, the message taught, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and the way people treat each other in the church.

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

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

3. What do you think Jesus means by the word love in this passage?

*Since Jesus says to love one another as He has loved us, I think he means a willingness to give what you have, including your life for the well being of another who is in need. Jesus keeps love as a very practical thing as in the story with the good Samaritan. Love is not love until it truly costs us something in order to give it to or on behalf of another person. Jesus spend time telling us how to treat people in Matthew 25. **Matthew 25:34-40 (NIV)***

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison

and you came to visit me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Love goes beyond simply trying to be nice, but being nice is at least a good place to start.

4. When you come to church, how intentional are you about showing love to someone that you do not know?

As a pastor, I try to greet as many new faces as I can, though I do not go out of my way as often for youth as I sometimes do for adults. That's something I need to work a little harder on.

The bible indicates two ways that love is revealed. One way has to do with our attitudes and the other has to do with our possessions. See the following passages.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

5. Which of these qualities of love is the most difficult for you to practice?

I am still working hard on the being patient part. I like to stick to time schedules. Sometimes that blinds me to the immediate needs of some people. I also struggle with the envy part. Sometimes it seems as though I work as hard as other pastors, but don't get the same results. I have to remind myself to not be envious of others, because my call is to be faithful where I am. The very thing I may be envying could cause my own destruction. Envy creeps back into my life even though I think I have mastered it.

6. Which of these qualities of love appears to be absent most often in the church?

I think the quality of "not being easily angered" is absent the most. I am amazed at how quickly people get their feelings hurt by one person, and want to take it out on the whole church by leaving the church. If a person's name is not called or isn't included in a listing, there is too much assuming that the omission was an intentional act done to get at the person. We don't allow enough room for honest mistakes to be made or for simple misunderstanding of each other actions. In the church, we expect other people to be perfect in their dealings toward us, but we do not require that same standard of ourselves in reference to others.

7. In order for Calvary and Glenville to come together to form a new congregation, which aspect of love in this passage would have to be at the forefront in the beginning of a new body of believers.

I think "love is kind" would have to be at the forefront. Kindness means we take the initiative in doing positive things for one another. The more things we sincerely do for each other, the quicker positive relationships will be built. Nothing would be more detrimental than one group accusing the other group of just being mean in the way they treat people.

8. If Calvary and Glenville do not come together, which aspect of love would need to be at the forefront of the congregation as it goes on a new journey in its history. (By new journey, I mean the end of the partnership agreement and the changing in the pastoral leadership pattern. Calvary would have one pastor and Glenville would have two.)

I think "love keeps no record of wrongs" will be very important. The natural tendency will be to start to blame people for the merger not going through by some. There has to be an acceptance, that this was not God's plan for us at this time. There cannot be a blaming of anyone for the change in pastoral leadership. The stress level will increase as we seek to discover God's will with fewer resources at our disposal, but if we do not keep record of wrongs we may have felt were dealt, then we can move forward because love always protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres.

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV) ¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother or sister in need but has no pity on him or her, how can the love of God be in him or her? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

9. What do you think it means to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters?

*I think it begins with an understanding that whatever I have, actually belongs to the kingdom of God. That includes my possessions and my life. It means that we do have a level of responsibility to and for each other. Your need does not always mean, I must fulfill it. Sometimes I need to see why your need came about. The Bible does not teach us to feed everybody who wants a meal. It tells us in **2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NIV)** ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." When a person refuses to take responsibility for himself/herself, that does not obligate a believer to do it for him or her.*

10. If you found out that one of our members was living in an abandoned housing during the nights, how motivated are you to do something about it, and what would you be willing to do?

A lot is going to depend on who the person is, and how did the person get to that spot. There is a difference between a person who had the money for rent, but used it for something else, and the person who lost her job and has no money. Another person's self created emergency does not have to become my emergency because of a last second phone call. We also have to consider whether or not we are truly in a place to help the person. Sometimes we may invite the person into our home, other times we may give the money for a hotel room, or other times we may be willing to drive the person to a shelter. Some people may have other options available to them if they just humble themselves and admit they were wrong in a situation. It was a bad attitude that led to the person being put out. A person once told me his girlfriend had put him out because she was mad at him. I told him, he didn't need my money for a hotel, he needed to go and apologize to her.

11. How can the church collectively do things to show love, that we as individuals may not be able to do?

Through our Deacons fund and Prescription fund, we can have money readily available to help people out. Our deacons can serve families at funerals, whereas individuals might find that a challenge. We can provide opportunities for encouragement and support in Sisters IN The Lord, Marriage Sensation, and Men Who Excel whereas individuals could not. We can provide Christmas gifts and Thanksgiving assistance for a host of people. We can come together to serve meals to the community.

12. How could it be possible that as a new congregation, we could more effectively carry out this command to have pity on our sisters and brothers?

The more resources we can pool together, the more people we are able to serve. More people also means you can offer more ministries to help those who are hurting without overtaxing the same people.

13. What ministries do we need inside the church to truly love one another?

Every ministry in the church should start with the premise, our primary purpose is to love the people with whom we come into contact. If each ministry put people first, that would solve a lot of our problems.

14. If both churches go on separate paths what opportunities are gained and what opportunities are lost in loving one another in the church.

We gain the opportunity to reaffirm our love for each other who existed in the church prior to the partnership, we miss the opportunity of working to expand that love to others. We probably will miss out on the opportunity to expand some ministries and to become a part of some that existed at the other church.

15. If Jesus calls individuals to lay down their lives, for another, do you think Jesus would ask a local church to lay down its life for the good of another? Why or why not.

Yes. Every church has a life span based on the times in which it finds itself. The smart churches discern when its time to make a change and they do it. Jesus is interested in building the kingdom of God, not necessarily maintaining a certain number of buildings. None of our buildings are ever going to heaven. Our hearts are to attach themselves to doing the will of God, whatever it might be.

. *David's flight from Saul* ([chaps. 18-20](#))

(1) DAVID'S POPULARITY.

[18:1-7](#). **David**, as has been seen, was not only chosen from eternity to be the founder of the messianic dynasty of kings, but he was also providentially prepared by the Lord to undertake his royal responsibilities. David had served as a shepherd in the fields and had the loving, protective heart of a shepherd, a fitting attribute of a king. He had learned responsibility and courage by confronting and slaying wild beasts that threatened his flock ([17:34-36](#)). He had learned to play the harp, a skill that would make him sensitive to the aesthetic side of life and that would help him compose the stirring psalms which extol the Lord and celebrate His mighty exploits. David had been brought into the palace of the king as musician and warrior so that he might acquire the experience of statecraft. Though an uninitiated novice at the time of his anointing, he was eminently equipped to be king of Israel at his coronation some 15 years later. But his education was not always pleasant. With his rising popularity among the people came a deterioration of his relationship with **Saul**, for the king became insanely jealous of Israel's new hero.

After David's dramatic victory over Goliath, Saul brought him into his palace once again, this time as a commander of his **army** ([18:5](#)). David's favored position in the court was further strengthened by the personal affection felt for him by **Jonathan**, Saul's oldest son ([vv. 1, 3](#)). So close did this friendship become that **Jonathan**, though heir apparent to the throne of Israel (cf. [20:31](#)), stripped himself of his own royal regalia and placed it on **David** in recognition of David's divine election to be king ([18:4](#); cf. [23:17](#)). More than once the covenant of friendship between the two men would work to David's advantage. Meanwhile David became so effective militarily that his exploits were celebrated in song: **Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.**

(2) SAUL'S JEALOUSY ([18:8-20:42](#)).

[18:8-16](#). So enraged was **Saul** at the diminishing of his glory that he, inspired by the demonic **spirit** ([v. 10](#); cf. [16:14-16](#); [19:9](#)), tried to **spear** David ([18:10-11](#); [19:9-10](#)). But God delivered **David** and gave him even greater popularity ([18:12-16](#)).

[18:17-30](#). When **Saul** then saw that he could not destroy **David** personally, he determined to let **the Philistines** kill him. This he arranged by proposing that **David** marry his oldest **daughter, Merab**. Saul had already reneged on one marital promise to David ([17:25](#)). **David** protested, however, that he was a commoner and had no sufficient bridal **price** ([18:25](#), *mōhar*, not “dowry” as in KJV and others). Before anything further could develop, **Merab... was given** to another man ([v. 19](#)). Again **Saul** offered his second daughter, **Michal**, who at that time loved **David** ([v. 20](#); cf. [2 Sam. 6:16](#)). But again **David** argued that he was unsuitable to be a **son-in-law** of the king because of his low status ([1 Sam. 18:23](#)). In an act of apparent generosity **Saul** waived the usual bridal payment and demanded only that David kill **100** Philistines and bring back their **foreskins** ([v. 25](#)), a requirement he more than met by slaying **200** ([v. 27](#)). **Saul** had been hoping, of course, that the exploit would cost **David** his life ([v. 25](#)). As a result, Saul was again **afraid of** David ([v. 29](#); cf. [vv. 12, 15](#)). But **David** became Saul’s **son-in-law** by marrying **Michal** ([v. 27](#)), and his military **success** and his popularity increased ([v. 30](#)).

[Chapter 19](#). After an initial and successful attempt by **Jonathan** to soothe his father’s feelings toward **David** ([vv. 1-7](#)), **Saul** set in motion further steps to destroy David. First he tried to slay him once more with his own hand ([vv. 9-10](#)); then he hired conspirators to murder him **in his bed**, a plot foiled by **Michal** ([vv. 11-17](#)). Next Saul **sent men to Naioth at Ramah** where **David** had taken refuge with **Samuel** ([vv. 18-24](#)). (**Ramah** was Samuel’s hometown.) Their efforts were also unsuccessful for they, and later **Saul**, were overwhelmed by **the Spirit of God** who **came** on them and caused them to “act like prophets” (NIV, **prophesied**, [vv. 20-21, 23-24](#)). This means that they fell into a trance or an ecstatic state, a condition which immobilized them and made them incapable of accomplishing their evil intentions.

[20:1-23](#). Having become persuaded of the irremedial nature of Saul's hostility toward him, **David** sought to learn its source and to determine if there might be a means of reconciliation. The test would be Saul's response to David's absence from the **New Moon** feast ([v. 5](#)), held on the first day of every month ([Num. 28:11-15](#)). If Saul became upset about David's absence, then David would know that there was no hope of patching up their differences. If, however, the king was amenable, then all was not lost ([1 Sam. 20:6-8](#)). **Jonathan** would approach his **father** on the matter and communicate the results to **David** by signaling with **arrows** ([vv. 18-23](#)).

[20:24-42](#). At first **Saul... thought** David was absent because he was **ceremonially unclean** ([v. 26](#)). But then Saul's response was what David feared. After David's absence on **the second day**, Saul was filled with rage toward **David** and also toward **Jonathan** (vv. 30, 33). **As long as** David lived, Saul said, there was no hope that his own dynasty would continue (v. 31).

With heavy heart **Jonathan** signaled to **David** the next **morning** by his words to a **boy** and with **arrows** (vv. 34-40). **Jonathan** and **David** met and **wept together** (v. 41). It was obvious that friendship with Saul was impossible. But **Jonathan** said that his own bond of loyalty with **David** would never be broken (v. 42). Jonathan was giving up a kingdom for the love of a friend.

Commentary II

18

1-5 Jonathan and David Make a Covenant

1 the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David—This seems to reflect affection for David, and political loyalty (Klein). Jonathan was ten to twenty years older than David. In [2 Samuel 9](#) we learn of Jonathan's fully-grown son who also had a son ([9:12](#)).

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant—Such covenants of brotherhood are common in the Near East. They are ratified by certain ceremonies, and in the presence of witnesses (although in this case a legal witness might have been imprudent). Those who have entered into a covenant relationship can refer to each other as "brother" (e.g., Solomon and Hiram, [1 Kings 5:1-12](#); [9:13](#)).

4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David—To be given any part of the dress which had been worn by a sovereign, or his eldest son and heir, is considered in the East the highest honor which can be conferred on a subject (see comments on [Esther 6:8](#)). For a soldier to give his weapons to another is to give a part of himself, showing they indeed had become knit together (McKane). Perhaps this gesture also betokens the transferral of the right of succession (Klein).

5 Saul set him over the men of war—David is given military status as a commander.

6-16 Saul Becomes Envious and Fearful

6 women came out of all cities of Israel—A noteworthy public event such as a military victory or a coronation was an occasion for a feast. In celebrating a victory, the women were the predominant participants, with much singing and dancing (cf. Miriam in [Exod. 15:20, 21](#); and Jephthah's daughter in [Judg. 11:34](#)). Clearly David had captured their hearts, and Saul did not like it at all. Note that he first "was afraid of David" ([18:12, 15](#)); then "was yet the more afraid of him" ([18:29](#)). A growing paranoia is evident. No specific battles are mentioned; presumably the Philistines are being attacked in smaller forays, raids, etc. This would be along the lines of Israel's military policy: stay out of big battles, especially those in the open plains, where Philistine chariots could be used.

9 Saul eyed David—i.e., enviously, with secret and suspicious hatred. His increasing jealousy parallels his fear (cf. [18:13](#)).

10 the evil spirit from God came upon Saul—Cf. note at [16:14](#) on "spirits." **he prophesied**—Saul was in a frenzy. David, perceiving the symptoms, tried to soothe the king by his music. The symptoms are of some form of irrationality, some deep-seated disturbance of Saul's personality. The historian attributes his actions to an evil spirit. **there was a javelin in Saul's hand**—The Hebrew word is *h[anîṭ*, i.e., "spear" (so NASB,

JB, NEB, NIV, RSV). The spear was not a throwing weapon; it was designed differently than the javelin (Heb. *kîdôn*) which could be accurately thrown. David's escape was probably aided by the fact that Saul's weapon was not a javelin, but a spear ([18:11](#)).

13 Therefore Saul removed him from him—Saul can no longer endure the sight of David. Perhaps he thought that once he was gone, he would be "out of sight, out of mind"—of the populace, the king's retinue, and Jonathan. **and made him his captain over a thousand**—The basic unit of the Israelite army, the exact number was probably not a thousand. This is a demotion from his previous office (Mauchline). Saul appears to have placed David in a more vulnerable position, hoping perhaps that he would die in combat. This same ploy was later used by David to get rid of Uriah ([2 Sam. 11:14-21](#)). But nothing Saul does can prevent the people from loving David all the more, making matters worse for Saul.

1 David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan—Saul's presence in Ramah must have made David uneasy, for Saul's ecstatic state would soon come to an end. Jonathan was apparently in Gibeah, Saul's capital, so David returns to the scene of the events of [1 Samuel 19](#). With Saul in Ramah, David probably thought it safe to consult with Jonathan. The latter seems blind to his father's irrationality with regard to David, perhaps trusting in the oath Saul took earlier (cf. [19:6](#)). In any case, he felt assured ([20:2](#)) that his father would do nothing without telling him first. The natural instincts of a son toward his father blinded Jonathan to Saul's defects and made him reluctant to believe him capable of such violent behavior.

5 tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat—The new moon of each month was celebrated by public sacrifices—a burnt offering of two bulls, a ram, and seven lambs, along with the prescribed offerings and libations, plus a goat as a sacrifice for sin ([Num. 28:11-15](#)). It was also a feast day ([Isa. 1:13](#)) and like the sabbath, a day of rest ([Amos 8:5](#)). [First Samuel 20:19, 27](#) implies that the feast lasted two days. However, it is clear from [Leviticus 23:24, 25](#) and [Numbers 29:1-6](#) that only the feast of the new moon that fell in the seventh month had significant ritual importance in the Hebrew calendar. David, both as the king's son-in-law and as a commander of the king's troops, dined on such occasions at the royal table. His return to Gibeah could hardly remain unnoticed, so his presence in the citadel would be doubly expected. This

occasion was chosen by the two friends for testing the king's state of mind by means of a small breach of etiquette on David's part: Saul's reaction would provide the clue to his true feelings about David.

8 deal kindly with thy servant—In appealing to Jonathan's kindness (Heb. *hesed*), David is recalling the covenant made in [18:3, 4](#). He is asking Jonathan to be loyal to the covenant they made.

10 Who shall tell me?—The real answer is found several verses later in [20:18-23](#).

11-17 Jonathan and David Renew Their Covenant

11 Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go into the field—In view of the serious threats to David, Jonathan reaffirms his commitment to David and pledges to ascertain Saul's intentions for David; and with an oath, he swears to inform David of Saul's attitude toward him ([20:12-14](#)).

15 thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house forever—This foreshadows the events of [2 Samuel 9](#). This exchange of promises, for dramatic interest and for its revelation of how the bonds of friendship and loyalty (Heb. *hesed*) to their covenant can endure the stress and strain of life, stands as a model for human friendship. Jonathan's words seem to reveal the uncertainty of his own future, but a degree of confidence is placed in David's.

18-23 Jonathan Proposes a Signal

19 when thou hast stayed three days—By then, Jonathan suggests, Saul's attitude will be plainly understood. **come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand**—probably referring to [19:2](#). **remain by the stone Ezel**—The meaning of Ezel is unknown. Nearly all modern translations, by making a very small change in the writing of the Hebrew for "Ezel," can translate it, "stone pile," or "mound" (McCarter).

21 The LORD be between thee and me for ever—Jonathan's last remark at his formal parting from David is a prayerful allusion to their covenant, and the conviction that even if circumstances at the court force their separation, "the link between the two men would be maintained by Yahweh himself" (Klein).

24-34 Saul, Missing David, Tries to Kill Jonathan

25 the king sat upon his seat, as at other times ... by the wall—This verse may be saying, indirectly, that Saul's regular table companions were Abner, Jonathan, and David. In this case, of course, Saul's court is authentically depicted in its simplicity. **Abner**—Saul's cousin, the son of Ner, who was Saul's uncle. Abner was also general of Saul's armies.

26 he is not clean—At a feast connected with a religious celebration, all participants had to be ritually clean (Ackroyd). There were many accidental ways by which a person could become involuntarily "unclean"—i.e., made unfit for ceremonial participation until the end of the day (sundown). (Cf. [Lev. 15:16](#); [Deut. 23:11](#)). Saul thinks that ritual impurity may explain David's absence.

27 on the morrow, which was the second day of the month—The festival may at this time have lasted two days (cf. note on [20:5](#)). But David may have had a regular seat at the king's table daily, as [20:25](#) implies. **Saul said unto Jonathan his son, wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse**—The question was asked, as it were, casually, and with as great an air of indifference as Saul could assume. At Jonathan's prearranged reply, the pent-up passions of the king burst out in a violent storm of rage against his son.

29 my brother ... hath commanded me—his eldest brother? Why his brother should urge him, rather than Jesse, to be at the family festivity is not clear. David had earlier concocted the story as a cover for his absence ([20:6](#)).

30 Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman—This demeaning insult is directed at Jonathan, not his mother (Saul's wife), implying he had shamed his mother (McCarter). Much obscene talk follows the line of insulting a man through his parents, and his mother is obviously the more vulnerable one. The original idea behind such language may have been that a true son of a mother finds it more intolerable to hear her slandered than to be maligned himself, a principle that remains true in the Middle East. Something of this response is reflected in Jonathan's abrupt departure from the table. Saul might as well have said, "You are no son of mine!" Saul has come to realize that Jonathan's loyalty to David is greater

than to himself. David has won everybody's heart, even in Saul's family, even Jonathan's—all taken from Saul. The kingdom will be next!

31 as long as the son of Jesse liveth—Saul recognizes that David's popularity makes him an obvious successor to the throne, and he is baffled that Jonathan, the heir apparent, should be supporting David (McCarter).

33 Saul cast a javelin at him—a sad proof of the crazed state of mind into which the unhappy Saul had been transported. "Spear," rather than "javelin," is the preferred rendering of the Hebrew word *h[anî't* ("Weapons of Warfare," *ISBE*). This near-fatal attack convinced Jonathan that Saul was bent on destroying David.

35-40 the Final Parting of David and Jonathan

36 he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot—The first words were spoken to the boy, but also to alert David. The question in [20:37](#), called to the boy, is meant for David's ears: this is the signal arranged in [20:32](#) to indicate danger to David.

40 Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad—lit. "his equipment," i.e., the bow and arrows that were probably kept in a quiver ("Quiver," *ISBE*). By commanding his page to take his archery equipment back to the city, Jonathan could meet alone with David for their final farewell.

41, 42 Jonathan and David Part in Sorrow

The original plan was that the signal was to be given, and David would either depart in haste or would emerge from hiding. But Jonathan's deep love for David, and the knowledge that David would be a fugitive, prompts one more emotional farewell.

41 David ... fell on his face ... and bowed ... three times—Such displays of emotion are still much a part of Mediterranean culture.

42 Go in peace—Reassured by their pledge of faithfulness to each other and to loyalty to each other's descendants, they part.

Old Testament: Based on the Classic Commentary of Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown.

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Life-Sharing Lesson 3 Reaching Further I Samuel 18:1-10 20:1-34

1. Has there ever been a time in your life, when you were willing to give up something you wanted in order to look at the “big picture.”

Yes, I gave up my chance to run in the finals of the 220 yard dash, to make sure I was fresh to run in the 880 relay with my friends. Going to the state meet in the individual 220 was practically a shoe in in that the first 3 runners went and I was in the top 3. In the relay race, only the top finisher would go. There was another relay team almost our equal that we would have to beat. I knew our relay team had a better chance of winning in the state meet if we made it to the state, than I would have as an individual. I chose to run the 880 relay team and gave up my chance for an individual medal that day. Our 880 relay team did win that day at the regional event and headed to the state meet.. Our relay team had a photo finish in the final state meet. We were second by less than a tenth of a second. I was glad I chose the big picture, over what I was sure was guaranteed. The risk I took with the relay team, was well worth it.

One person who was willing to accept being number 2 was Jonathan, the rightful heir to the throne of his father King Saul. Jonathan was a big picture person, but in order to do so, it required great humility on his part. When we talk about a merger, the question will come up, “what’s in it for me?” The question is, is that the right question to be asking.

*The real question to ask is “which decision leads to the greatest potential for the advancement of the Kingdom of God with where we are today.” Making sacrifices is what following Jesus is all about. There will always be forks in the road that may call for us to yield something we love, in order to obtain the call of Christ on our lives. Jesus Put it this way, **Luke 14:26-27 (NIV)***

²⁶ *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple.*

²⁷ *And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*

1 Samuel 18:1-11 (NIV) (This story immediately follows David’s victory over Goliath and the huge victory over the Philistine army by King Saul’s army.

Jonathan is the king's son. Up until this day, David was just a lowly shepherd out in the field.)

¹ After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. ² From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. ³ And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

⁴ Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

⁵ Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul's officers as well. ⁶ When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

⁷ As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

⁸ Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"

⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. ¹⁰ The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand ¹¹ and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

2. Why do you think Jonathan makes a covenant with David and is so generous with him?

Jonathan sees David as an answer to his prayers and the prayers of others. By fighting Goliath, David has removed an embarrassment from Jonathan's father Saul. No one, including Jonathan had been willing to fight Goliath. Jonathan sees the blessing that David has been to the entire army and nation. Jonathan recognizes that David is the leadership of the future.

3. What is the big picture that Saul seems to be missing?

Saul fails to see how blessed he is to have David on his side. Saul is power hungry, so he sees those around him as being power hungry as well. He cannot see how David has benefitted him and the nation, because of his fear and suspicion, that David really just wants to replace Saul on the throne. Saul has a very difficult time

thinking of partnership in leadership. He wants all the glory to be centered on him. He does not even consider the possibility that God is trying to help him in his position as king.

4. How would Saul lose, if he got what he wanted in killing David?

Saul would lose one of the greatest military leaders of his day. David was a great leader because of God's anointing on his life. Saul would have lost the affection of many people who were truly thankful for what God had done through David. Saul would have made all of his generals hesitant about having too many victories over the enemy. Saul would have further alienated himself from God and from his son Jonathan. Saul's enemies may have been more eager to attack him, without his star general leading in battle.

1 Samuel 20:1-34 (NIV)

¹ Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, "What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to take my life?" ² "Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without confiding in me. Why would he hide this from me? It's not so!" ³ But David took an oath and said, "Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death."

⁴ Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."

⁵ So David said, "Look, tomorrow is the New Moon festival, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.' ⁷ If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me.

⁸ As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"

⁹ "Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?" ¹⁰ David asked, "Who will tell me if your father

answers you harshly?"

¹¹ "Come," Jonathan said, "let's go out into the field." So they went there together.

¹² Then Jonathan said to David: "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know?"

¹³ But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family--not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."

¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to David: "Tomorrow is the New Moon festival. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. ²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. ²¹ Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger. ²² But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away.

²³ And about the matter you and I discussed--remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever." ²⁴ So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon festival came, the king sat down to eat.

²⁵ He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty. ²⁶ Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean--surely he is unclean." ²⁷ But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"

²⁸ Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem.

²⁹ He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."

³⁰ Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?" ³¹ As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!"

³² "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father.

³³ But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.

³⁴ Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.

5. How easy is it for you to stand in someone's shadow, when the spotlight rightfully belongs on you?

I try to give myself helping to build up others. I find my success at times in their success. My name does not always have to be included. I think there is more of spotlights on individuals than on Jesus in many areas of ministry.

6. What do you think is Jonathan's motivation for yielding his rightful place of authority to David's future as the next leader? What's in it for Jonathan?

Jonathan is interested in what is best for the kingdom of Israel. He believes that he and David could co-exist with each other. David could be his military leader and he could still sit on the throne. He does not see David as the power hungry individual that Saul sees. Jonathan wants to maintain unity in the nation. He sees his actions today as a bridge for a stronger relationship between him and David in the future. Jonathan does not have to be number one in everything. He is looking at the big picture for the future. He knows that their enemies are still out there, and that they are going to need each other to fight and defeat their enemies. When the Philistine army defeats Saul and kills Jonathan and his brothers, David and his men will be absent from the battle.

7. What do you think is King Saul's motivation for getting rid of David at this point? What good is King Saul possibly trying to maintain.

Saul wants to maintain his position of power and authority as long as he possibly can. He then wants to make sure that the kingdom remains in his family so that the throne passes from him to one of his sons. Saul does not answer the question of what kind of kingdom he would be passing on to his son, he just wants to make sure a kingdom is passed. I think jealousy remains at the heart of Saul wanting to kill David, even though he tries to dress it up in terms of wanting to establish Jonathan as the next king. It makes little sense to say he wants Jonathan as the next king, and then his next action is an attempt to kill Jonathan by hurling a spear at him.

8. As we discuss the merger, how do you see either Calvary or Glenville being asked to take on the role of Jonathan to make a new congregation possible?

Both churches have strong rich histories. Calvary was at one time the flagship church in the presbytery. Presbytery use to have all of its offices inside of Calvary church. Calvary has a history of sending youth all over the country on mission trips and fun activities. Calvary was a status church in every sense of the world. It was a leader in church racial integration. Glenville's history was rich in social action. It's history has been one of the "come-back kid." Glenville managed to begin growing when Calvary and the other churches in the city were facing a decline in membership, attendance, and giving. It became known for its youth and liveliness in worship. The past 25 years were much more favorable to Glenville than to Calvary. Today both churches have been linked together because of the partnership agreement. Both churches have to be like Jonathan which says, what is best for the nation is more important than what is best for me. The nation being the church as the body of Christ, and even as the body of Christ which meets inside the walls of each church. Glenville and Calvary will each have to yield their history and ascent in the future, to the future of a new congregation in which they both accept a less prominent role. Jonathan wanted his DNA and David's DNA to be combined to provide great future leadership for the nation.

We find this passage about Jesus. **Matthew 9:35-38 (NIV)**

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every

disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

9. What is the big picture that Jesus sees in this passage?

Jesus sees that there are a lot of people who are in need of coming into a relationship with him. He also sees that more workers are needed in order to bring the people into the kingdom so that he can be their shepherd as well. He had compassion for people who did not even know they needed his compassion.

10. When we go into the community, less than 10% of the congregation show up to go out knocking on doors. Only about 25% of the 11:15 service raised their hand in the affirmative when asked the Sunday before Easter, how many of you have taken cards to distribute to others. How could a new congregation be better equipped in sending more workers into the harvest field?

Both churches have people willing to go into the community even though they are in the minority. By combining the groups in both churches, that makes for a larger group being willing to go into the harvest field. We could use the new evangelism group to help duplicate itself and grow.

11. If our churches do not merge, and how much additional time are you willing to set aside to give in order to go into the harvest field to bring in new people.

12. We live in a global world today. The internet has made all kinds of things instantly available around the world. Is God calling us to win people in the

Glenville community or the Fairfax community, or is God calling us to win people for Christ, wherever we find them, wherever we may be?

We are called to win people wherever we might find them. We were never given the luxury of only concentrating in one area when God sends us into many neighborhoods through where we work, go to school, and live. A rich person in a rich neighborhood is just as much in need of God's grace as a poor person in a poor neighborhood. Jesus died equally for them both. God has given us different talents and gifts to reach people. Today a person in India is as likely to see part of our service as a person in Indiana on the web. Our ministries of feeding today touch people in Glenville, Fairfax, Haiti, India, and Nigeria. Each person we feed, is shown the love of Christ.

13. If our churches do not merge, what would you consider a vibrant healthy Calvary or a vibrant healthy Glenville to look like?

A healthy church is a church where more of its people are coming to bible study and are becoming tithers to support the ministry of the church. A healthy church is one that asks, are we doing enough to reach people who do not know Christ, and what are we doing to reach them. A healthy church actively supports ministries that cannot pay them back. They do ministry because Jesus tells them to do it. A healthy church mobilizes the majority of its members to be actively involved in the ministry of the church, and each person can identify what exactly their ministry in the church is. A healthy church is one in which the members genuinely love and make sacrifices for each other. Jesus is the reason they do what they do, and the Bible is the ultimate source of authority for daily living.

14. We recently had our first Spring Camp for kids at Calvary. We had African-Americans kids, a white kid, a Chinese kid and a Muslim kid. When we talk about the harvest for Christ, our goal should be a multi-ethnic church where all races come together. What changes are required of us, if we are to become more racially inclusive as churches or as a new church.

We have to look at what kind of advertising do we do on our website, our tv church program, and our materials. We have to look at who are we targeting in our evangelism. We have to look at our music and worship style. We have to consider

how we might bring other churches into our building. We have to look at our staffing patterns. We have to look at how we preach our messages.

15. Spend some time praying for wisdom as we come together as one congregation this weekend and prepare to vote. Please commit to being at the service at 10am at Calvary.