

Body Bugs: Dealing with the Infections that Undermine Unity – Final Week

Love – The Ultimate Inoculation against Body Bugs

1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

Main Idea: Great lovers long so much for the well being of others, and they experience such joy with others, they will do almost anything to translate love into action. Here are three qualities of a great lover modeled by Paul:

1. Great lovers are actively concerned about the spiritual welfare of others. *1 Thessalonians 3:1-5*

- A. *In affliction* – Lovers want to provide comfort when others are in pain. 3:3-4
 - 1. New Christians are often very disturbed when they suffer. 3:3
 - 2. Paul explained suffering in advance to the Thessalonians. 3:4
 - 3. The Christian answer to suffering doesn't minimize pain; it does provide courage.
- B. *In temptation* – Lovers know the deceitfulness of temptation and want to protect others from it. 3:5
 - 1. People need our help because temptation is so subtle.
 - 2. People need our help because the tempter is so strong.
- C. *Through sacrifice* – Lovers will make great sacrifices to meet the needs of others. 3:1-2
 - 1. Timothy made the sacrifice of a long and dangerous journey...*alone!* 3:2
 - 2. Paul made the sacrifice to be left alone at Athens. 3:1
- D. *Application* – When you love someone, sacrifice doesn't even seem like sacrifice.

2. Great lovers enjoy celebrating the victories of each other's faith. *1 Thessalonians 3:6-8*

- A. The Thessalonians experienced a great spiritual victory. 3:6-8
 - 1. The report of the victory comes through Timothy. 3:6a
 - 2. The nature of the victory is three-fold: 1) Their faith is strong toward God; 2) Their love is strong with each other; and 3) Their respect has grown toward their mentors. *All this in the midst of persecution!* 3:6b
 - 3. The celebration of the victory is intense: He feels comfort and joy. 3:7-8
- B. Why should we celebrate the spiritual milestones and victories of others?
 - 1. Faith – Remembering God's past grace is a stimulus to trust him for future grace.
 - 2. Honor – We honor others when we remember their milestones.
- C. What are some spiritual victories and important milestones that we might want to celebrate?
 - 1. There are some obvious ones: spiritual birthdays and anniversaries.
 - 2. There are some not so obvious ones: Dates when prayers were answered.
 - 3. Some spiritual milestones in our church. *11/11/94, 9/10/95, 12/6/96, Easter 1999.*

3. Great lovers become visionary prayer warriors. *1 Thessalonians 3:9-13*

- A. The definition of visionary prayer – Visionary prayer is sensing God's will for another person, through prayer, and then praying that God would fully accomplish his will in their life.
- B. The elements of visionary prayer. (We'll go from verse 13 back to verse 10.)
 - 1. It is future oriented: it sees people for what they will become. 3:13
 - 2. It is relationship oriented: it hopes that people will abound in love. 3:12a
 - 3. It is evangelistically oriented: it hopes that people will reach out to unbelievers. 3:12b
 - 4. It is personally involved: the prayer warrior seeks to be part of the growth. 3:10b-11
 - 5. It is consistent: Paul prays night and day. 3:10
- C. The emotions of visionary prayer. – Visionary prayer warriors experience intense joy in God. 3:9
- D. Get serious about visionary prayer!