

23T14a Love of Christ- Introduction

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table. I'm Kip your host for this series.

What does it mean to live a life centered on and around the "love of Christ?" We are going to be exploring this over the next few sessions based on a book by Adele Calhoun titled "*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*."¹

Let's pray.

Before we begin today, I want to go back to my title slide for a moment. This picture was taken by my wife's sister Joy. When we started this media ministry @ the PUNLA Coffee Table, I was looking for catchy names. I turned the creative brain-storming over to my wife and sister. They both love coffee. In fact, on a recent trip, our family stayed at several different Hotels, my wife's ranking of hotels had nothing to do with the rooms or beds or location. She and Joy both started with what the coffee was like. Good coffee good room, Great Coffee great room and bad coffee, you guessed it bad room. I actually don't even drink coffee but here we are. Our media ministry is called @ the PUNLA Coffee Table, go figure. Any way. This is one of my favorite Bible because it is a parallel NIV, KJV, AMP, and NAS translations. I love seeing the translations side by side as I read and study. That's probably the dyslexic engineer in me.

Back to our series. I want to share with you one section from this Spiritual Disciplines Handbook. The section is Title the "Incarnate the Love of Christ". What does that mean? God is love. God loves, us His children. God loves His creation. No matter how you are or what you've done, God loves you.

Incarnate means to embody or represent. As followers of Jesus, we are commanded to Love others the way Jesus loves them. *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* (John 15:12 NIV). Making God's love incarnate means embodying that love to others. I mean showing the Love of God to everyone, especially the person you don't like. The word Jesus used was agape, "I will good for you." You wish and pray good for those around you especially the ones you don't like. *"not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead.* (1 Peter 3:9a NAS)

God is very clear, we are to love others in a way that embodies the love of Christ through our lives, actions and words. We are going discuss different aspects of this throughout this series,

1. Encouragement (blessing others)
2. Care of the Earth
3. Compassion
4. Control of the Tongue
5. Forgiveness
6. Humility
7. Justice
8. Solidarity (in Jesus' Sufferings)
9. Stewardship

¹ Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Transforming Resources). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

10. Honesty (Truth Telling)

Each of these are part of embodying the love of Chris to the world and this list is not complete. You might be able to come up with more.

Let's go ahead and look at the first one on this list, "Encouragement". This is blessing others. Blessing everyone who God puts in your life path. Adele uses a great structure in her book to keep of focused. Define. Definition. Scripture. Practice. And Fruit.

Our desire is to encourage. We desire to instill courage, We desire to instill confidence and hope. We desire to do this through expressing the delight God has for others.

Next how do we define it? To bless and encourage others is to speak well of them, inspire them with God's words of hope, confidence and delight.

The Apostle Paul spoke of how important this was to the church in Thessalonica. *Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.* (1 Th 5:11 NAS).

So, How do we put this into practice in our lives? Prayer. Prayer for. Prayer like placing your hands on someone's head and declaring God's words "You are my beloved son/daughter, whom I love" (Mark 1:11). It can be speaking or writing Scriptural words of encouragement to someone or speaking words that empower, nurture and give courage to others.

So how do we know we are encouraging others by embodying Christ's love? Fruit! God-given-fruit. When we bless others, we builds up the body of Christ by being the conduit God uses to fill the human hunger for blessings. As we spread God's love and delight, the delight of God's people spreads to one another.

Many people feel more cursed than blessed. They wonder if they matter. Anger leaks out and offense is easily taken. Sadness and depression seem to fill every narrative in our lives. People have a hunger for a kind word. We should remember times people encouraged us and what it felt like. We should also remember times we did not get needed encouragement and what that felt like. Two totally different emotions. Can you remember a time you encouraged someone else. I can tell you from personal experience it feels great. I wish I did it more. Join me. Let's try to find a positive thing to say to the people around us at least ten times a day. I challenge you. God will reward us with much joy with we only do as He has commanded us to do. Bless Others.

What about, "Caring for Creation". Care for the Earth.

"This land that gives us our food, our water; these trees that clean the air for us to breathe; all these green and growing things that bless our bodies with their

beauty—these are not resources. They are fellow creatures, with their own rights and responsibilities before God. They have their own sacred duties to perform, if only we will let them.” Barbara Brown Taylor

Our desire is to honor the Creator by loving, nurturing and stewarding his creation

Next how do we define it? Caring for creation is a way of expressing God’s love for His very good creation. By actively loving and caring for creation, that is the environment, the plants and the animals, we honor the gifts and treasures of our Creator.

For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that h the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:19-21 NIV)

How do we put this into practice in our lives? Protecting the earth’s natural resources, working against pollution, treating animals humanely, using energy supplies wisely, recycling, not littering. These are just some of the ways we can choose to live are lives in away that show that we care for the creation of God.

What is the evidence we are doing this? Honoring the Creator and celebrating His handiwork. Make your yard and home beautiful with flowers and plants. Witnessing to others about wise Godly stewardship environment and resources.

We should always act like we know God owns everything. Acting like the created world belongs to God, not us humans. Our world is a gift from God, how we use it matters to God.

I think I’ll stop there for today.

Let’s Pray.

Let me leave you with this. What we do and say matter to God. Jesus commanded us to love others as He loves. Not as we love or want to be loved, but the way Jesus loves. As followers of Jesus, our lives should reflect Christ. Our lives are to embody the love of Christ to the lost and broken living in His world.

Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA CoffeeTable. If you liked the message, please share a link with a friend. You can contact me at kip@punla.org if you have comments or questions. So, until next time @ the PUNLA CoffeeTable. God bless.