

November 4, 2007 by Steve Brandon



Genuine Love

1 Peter 1:22

1. The Foundations of Genuine Love

a. Regeneration

b. Obedience

c. Purity

2. The Characteristics of Genuine Love

a. Sincerity

b. Fervency

c. Authenticity

Let's begin this morning with a little fill in the blank exercise. I will begin a passage of Scripture and I want for you to fill in the blank.

1 Corinthians 13:13, "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is _____."

John 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have _____ for one another."

Romans 13:8, "Owe nothing to anyone except to _____ one another."

Galatians 5:14, "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall _____ your neighbor as yourself.'"

Colossians 3:12-14, "Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on _____."

1 Thess. 4:9, "As to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to _____ one another."

1 Timothy 1:5, "The goal of our instruction is _____."

Hebrews 10:24, "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to _____ and good deeds."

1 John 4:11, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to _____ one another."

John 13:34, "A new commandment I give you, that you _____ one another."

Matthew 5:43-44, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, _____ your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

2 Peter 1:5-7, "Applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, Perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, _____."

I trust that you have seen how every single blank here should be filled in with the word, "love." It really is quite astonishing when you think about how many times the Scripture exhorts us to love one another. I have only given you a mere sampling of the Scriptural teaching on this topic, by quoting from a dozen (or so) of the most prominent verses that place the word "love" toward the end of the exhortation. There are a bunch more that I could have quoted. For instance, ...

John 15:12, "This is my commandment, that you **love** one another."

Romans 12:9, "Let **love** be without hypocrisy."

Romans 12:10, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly **love**."

1 Corinthians 16:14, "Let all that you do be done in **love**."

Galatians 5:6, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through **love**."

Galatians 5:22, "The fruit of the Spirit is **love**."

Ephesians 5:2, "walk in **love**, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us."

1 Thessalonians 5:12, "and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in **love** for one another."

1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, **love**, faith and purity, show yourself and example of those who believe."

Hebrews 13:1, "Let **love** of the brethren continue."

1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us **love** one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

1 John 4:19, "We **love**, because He first loved us."

Even this list isn't exhaustive of all of the Biblical exhortations given to love. I didn't count, but my guess is that there are more than 50 commands to love the brethren given in the Bible. On top of this, there are many examples of those who love being commended for their love.

This morning, we come to a text of Scripture that again exhorts us to love one another.

1 Peter 1:22

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart."

Let's look first at ...

1. The Foundations of Genuine Love

By foundations, I simply mean the things that ground you in your love. In other words, the facts of life that compel you to love. In this text we see three foundations of love. The first one is ...

a. Regeneration

Do you see this in our text? This actually doesn't come in verse 22. Rather, it comes in verse 23, in which Peter grounds all of his thoughts of verse 22. Verse 23 gives the reason why Peter calls these scattered believers to a life of genuine love. And so, I thought that it would be best to deal with it first. He says, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God."

The fundamental foundation of genuine love comes in the work that God does in our soul. Peter says that his readers "have been born again." That is, they have been changed in their innermost being. Through faith in Jesus Christ (verse 21), God has changed them to be different people than they ever were before.

I have used the term, "Regeneration" to describe this change. This is simply the theological term that is often associated with this idea of being "born again." This idea of "regeneration" refers to one who has been transformed by the power of God into a new creature. In Titus 3:5, Paul puts some context to this term, where he says, "God has saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

When God saves us, He changes us. He "regenerates" us. He "renews" us. In other words, God changes us, so much so that it's like we were "born again." In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul described this event, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come."

To genuinely love others, you must first have a changed heart. By nature, we are self-centered creatures. But, love, as its most basic level is others-centered. To be other's-centered, we need to be changed. God needs to change us. This is what's done when God regenerates us. He changes us and equips us to love.

Consider 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." In this verse, we see the connection between regeneration and love. The connection is foundational. Our call to love comes first from God, who is love. Secondly, our ability to love comes from being "born of God." Remember, "Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." God is love. And when people are "born again," they are changed to take on the characteristics of God.

When babies are born of earthly parents, they bear a resemblance toward their mother and father. Our son, David, was born just over five months ago. I can't tell you how many times people have seen him and said, "Yep. He looks like a Brandon." In saying this, they are telling Yvonne and I that they see a resemblance in the family. My wife and I see it as well. I went to pick up the little guy this morning. He had rolled over to his back like a big boy. And as I looked at him through the dawning light, I had flashbacks to thirteen years ago seeing my youngest daughter at that same age. They look very much alike.

So it is with God as well. When people are born of God, when people are born again, when people are regenerated, they will bear a resemblance to their heavenly Father. Particularly, they will show forth the resemblance of love.

These things are so fundamental to love, that the next verse (in 1 John) says the same thing, but in reverse. John writes, "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). In other words, the one who doesn't love isn't born of God.

Suppose that my wife and I would adopt a child from Nepal. This child would be dark skinned, have brown eyes, and you could detect a slight Asian resemblance. When you looked at that child and looked at us, you would notice the incongruity. Yvonne and I would never produce a child that looks like that child. You could rightly assume that we adopted the child into our home from another country. Indeed, it's our child, but it wasn't born of us.

In the same way, it's true of people as well. If you look at someone and see that they aren't a loving person, you can pretty well assume that they haven't been born of God. They may be attending church. They may have a smile on their face when you see them. They may nod up and down at the preaching of the word. They may love to sing praises to God. But, if they lack love, 1 John 4:8 tells us that they don't know God. That's how fundamental the connection is between "love" and being "born again." They are intricately connected.

We see these things connected also in 1 Thessalonians 4:9. In writing to those in Thessalonica, Paul says, "Now as to the

love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." Paul says, "I don't need to instruct you in love, because God has already instructed you." Now, it's not that God had spoken to them audibly and taught them how it is that they should love God. Rather, it's that God's nature to love was passed on to them when they became believers in Christ and were born again. Earlier in 1 Thessalonians (1:3-4), Paul identified their great "labor of love" as one of the chief characteristics by which He discerned that God had indeed chosen them unto salvation.

You don't need to instruct a baby boy to love playing with trucks. It's how God made them to be! You don't need to instruct a baby girl to love playing with dolls. It's how God made them to be! You don't need to instruct a Christian to love the brethren. It's how God made them to be!

There is a reason why regeneration and love are so bonded together. See, there is no reason for any one of us to love others sacrificially and selflessly, unless we are living for something greater than the fulfillment of our pleasures. But, when God regenerates us, He gives us a different goal in life, that gives us every reason in the world to give of ourselves to others in genuine, Biblical love.

Consider 1 Peter 1:3, where Peter first mentions this concept of being "born again." As you read this verse, notice what the end result of our being "born again" actually is. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). This verse tells us that we are "born again" to a living hope. In other words, we are "born again" to have a hope that goes beyond this life. We have a hope of heaven. We have a hope of future joy. And, such a hope gives us reason to completely give of ourselves to others in self-less sacrifice, because there is something more than this life we are living for. We will gladly give of ourselves to others in genuine love, because we are no longer living for ourselves. This is the product of being "born again."

And in this sense, our regeneration is foundational to all Biblical love. And here in 1 Peter 1:23, we see the same things. Verse 22 calls us to love. Verse 23 gives us the reason why it is that we love, because we have been regenerated by the work of God.

Let's turn to the second foundation of "fervent love." This foundation is ...

b. Obedience.

This can be seen at the beginning of verse 22. As you read through this verse, see if you can find it, "Since you have in **obedience** to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart."

Our love for others comes from our obedience to the truth. First and foremost, the love we show for others comes from our obedience to the truth.

In my introduction this morning, I rattled off some 25 verses that all command us to love. Do you want to be obedient to God? Then be one who loves other people. It's as simple as that. Let me give you a dozen more verses that demonstrate this.

Romans 13:10, "**Love** does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love** is the fulfillment of the law."

Romans 14:15, "If because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to **love**."

1 Corinthians 8:1, "Knowledge makes arrogant, but **love** edifies."

1 Cor 13:1-3, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have **love**, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have **love**, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have **love**, it profits me nothing."

1 Corinthians 14:1, "Pursue **love**."

Ephesians 4:2, "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in **love**."

Ephesians 4:16 describes how "the whole body ... causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in **love**."

Philippians 1:9 finds Paul praying, "that your **love** may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment."

In 1 Thessalonians 3:12, Paul prayed, "may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in **love** for one another, and for all people."

1 Timothy 6:11, "flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, **love**, perseverance and gentleness."

1 John 3:11, "This is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should **love** one another."

1 John 3:23, "This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **love** one another, just as He commanded us."

There you have twelve more verses from the Scripture that call us to love one another. One of the foundations of genuine,

Biblical love, is obedience. God calls us to love.

Are there any here today that would deny that God has called us to love one another? You have to trample a few dozen verses to do so. For anyone to deny our call to love one another, has missed the thrust of the Scriptures.

In the first two verses of Peter's epistle, he draws us to the role of obedience in a believer's life. Obedience to Jesus is fundamental to the whole reason why God chose us unto salvation. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who ... are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure." God has chosen us to a life of obedience. Peter writes, "that you may obey Jesus Christ."

Peter learned this from Jesus, who called us and chose us as His disciples to love. In speaking with the disciples, Jesus said, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you" (John 15:16). And what is the fruit that Jesus was looking for? In the very next verse, Jesus says, "This I command you, that you love one another" (John 15:17). It's clear, Jesus chose His twelve disciples with a purpose: that they might love one another. Peter here takes the teaching of Jesus and applies it to all of us. God has chosen us unto salvation, that we might love others.

Paul was so clear on the centrality of love that he actually said that "love" is the entire goal for which he labored as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). If you would ask Paul what his main goal was in all of his teaching, he would tell you, "Love is my main goal. I desire to see that the end result of my preaching and teaching is found in my listeners loving one another. It's not doctrinal knowledge that I'm primarily seeking to achieve. It's not a people marveling at my teaching abilities. It's not a people learning something new that they had never heard before. No, I have one goal in mind. I want to instill within the hearts of my hearers of greater love for one another." To borrow the phrasing from James, Paul wanted his listeners to be doers of the word and not hearers only. And the particular deed that Paul was looking for was love.

At the end of the day of ministering to others, Paul would say that he wants to see the fruit of love in the people of God. This is my aim as well. Should you ask me, "What do you want your teaching at Rock Valley Bible Church to produce?" I would say, "I want it to produce a genuine love among us." I can't force it. God needs to come and help. I can pray for love. I can model love for others. I can teach on love. But, I can't produce it in us. It's only going to happen when you come to terms with how central love ought to be in this body, and respond obediently.

There's a third foundation of love. It's ...

c. Purity

Again, consider our text, "Since you have in obedience to the truth **purified** your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

This point is closely connected to my previous point, because your love for others is manifestation of holiness and obedience in your life.

You see this connection between love and purity in several Biblical passages. The first is the verse we just finished considering from Paul's pen, "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." The love that Paul wanted to see comes from a pure heart. This is exactly my point. Purity is one of the foundations to love. When your soul is purified, you will love.

Paul linked love and purity in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity show yourself an example of those who believe." As a pastor, Timothy was to be an example in both love and purity. Another instance of this connection between love and purity is found in the law. What is the law about? It's about purity. It's about living in such a purified way that God is pleased with us. And yet, how is the law summed up? "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal. 5:14). Do you want a pure life? Then love others.

Purity of life is a foundation for love. You will never love others as the Bible calls us to until you make the decision to live a pure life. A desire for purity comes first. Then comes love. Consider the deeds of the flesh as listed in Galatians 5. They are mostly relational, "enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, ..." To flee from these is a step toward purity, because purity means love.

It is right here that you see the connection to the context of 1 Peter. Peter is writing to a suffering people. Their suffering is no excuse for unrighteous behavior. Rather, they need to live righteously (1:14-16; also 1:2). Love for the brethren is a manifestation of holiness.

2. The Characteristics of Genuine Love

There are three characteristics of love that are clear in our text. The first is, ...

a. Sincerity

Again, as you read this verse, see if you can see where this characteristic is identified in the text. "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a **sincere** love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

The literal way to translate this term is, "unhypocritical." Peter reminds these believers that they have purified their souls for an "unhypocritical" love of the brethren. Paul says the same thing in Romans 12:9, "Let love be without hypocrisy." Don't pretend your love. Don't fake your love. Let your love be sincere.

When you think about this word, "hypocrite," you should think of an actor on a stage. Their appearance upon the stage is an act. It's not who they really are.

Some of you know that our children have recently been involved in a group called, "Christian Youth Theatre." We've been very happy with this group. Our children have had a lot of fun. They have learned many things. A few weeks ago, they were in a musical about Robin Hood. One of the characters in this story was Lady Merrill. She was the strict, stern woman who was given charge over Maid Marian, the love of Robin Hood. When I saw the production of this musical for the first time, I was immediately impressed with how stern and mean Lady Merrill was. She looked and acted like a harsh girl. And so, I asked my daughter about her. I said, "Tell me about the person who plays Lady Merrill. What's she like when she's not on the stage playing her part? Is she a grumpy girl." When I asked my daughter this question, she instantly laughed. She said, "No. On the contrary. She's about the nicest girl that there is in the group." Well, she had me fooled. This is a hypocrite. One who plays the part and deceives all others around.

Peter says, "Don't be hypocritical in your love." Let your love be genuine. Let it be real.

Hypocrisy often takes place in the religious world. Jesus pointed this out in the Pharisees. He said that they love to act religious before men, but in reality, they are simply a show. He said that they would sound forth their trumpets before they gave to draw attention to their giving (Matt. 6:1-4). He said that they would utter long prayers outside on the street corners for all to hear, so that they might be thought of as righteous before others (Matt. 6:5-8). He said that they would put on a gloomy face when they were fasting, that they might be noticed by others (Matt. 6:16-18). Jesus hated their hypocrisy! He pronounced curses upon them. "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrite! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence" (Matt. 23:25). Hypocrites look good on the outside, but should you poke and prod a bit, you will quickly discover that their righteousness is only a show. Likewise, Jesus hates your hypocrisy as well. He hates it when you put on a front that you are one thing, but in reality, you are not.

When it comes to this area of loving the brethren, Peter tells us to love each other with a sincere love. John said it this way, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). Let our love not only be with words, but also with actions.

I remember attending a wedding of our friends in California. The wedding went smoothly. Then, we went to the wedding reception, which was a great celebration. And, for some reason, the microphone was handed to the bride's father. I can still remember to this day what he said. He began by addressing his daughter. He said something to the effect of this, ...

When I first saw you this morning in your wedding dress, I was stunned at your beauty. My mind, then drifted back to 25 years ago when your mother walked down the aisle with her father. I was stunned with your mother's beauty as well. She is just as beautiful today as she was on our wedding day. And I am more in love with her now than I ever was before. May your love for your new husband grow and grow like our love for each other has grown.

On the one hand, this sounds like a very admirable thing to tell your daughter at her wedding. But, it was all a lie. Because we had talked with our friends, we knew that they were having some major marital problems at the time. A short time later, they were divorced. What this man said at that wedding reception was bold-faced hypocrisy! And Peter says that your love ought not to be hypocritical. Your love for each other ought not to be only a show. But, let it be sincere.

The second characteristic of genuine love we see in our text is ...

b. Fervency

Do you see this point in this verse? "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, **fervently** love one another from the heart."

Literally, this means, "stretching." The idea is that of going beyond your convenience. It means going out of your way. It means going over and above.

Perhaps you remember the story of David when he was fighting against the Philistines near Bethlehem. The Philistines had overtaken Bethlehem, and David and his mighty men were waging war against the Philistines. And David had a craving. He had grown up in Bethlehem and knew what the water tasted like there. He said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate" (2 Sam. 23:15). Three of David's mighty men heard what David had

said, and demonstrated their love for him in a most unique way. If David craved the water from the well, they wanted David to have the water from the well. "So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David" (2 Sam. 23:16). Such an act was a stretching act of love. It took them way beyond their comfort zone. But, they risked their lives for their well-loved commander-in-chief. David refused to drink the water, pouring it out to the LORD and saying, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" (2 Sam. 23:17).

Another good Biblical example of this is the life of Esther. Through sovereign circumstances in her life, she found herself to be the sovereign queen of Persia. And yet, through a series of events, the king had signed a decree that was intended "to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children ... and to seize their possessions as plunder" (Esther 3:13). If Esther would come into the presence of the king and reveal her identity and request that he rescind the edict, it was at the risk of her life. And yet, for the love of her people, this is exactly what Esther did. She stretchingly loved her people.

This is genuine, Biblical love. It goes way above and beyond the call of duty. At times, such an expression can even bring someone to be uncomfortable in your acts of sacrifice. This, in part, was certainly why David poured out the water. He was uncomfortable in how far his loyal followers went in displaying their love for him.

A good example of that took place this weekend. Many of you know that I went to a Father/Son camp with my son on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The event was held at Walnut Point State Park, about four hours south of Rockford. It was cold and we were camping! The Bible teaching was great. The activities were enjoyable. There were about 500 fathers and sons at this thing. There were a few people there who I knew. One man chased me down and told me that the transmission on his car went out, and that he needed a car trailer to transport the car from the camp back to DeKalb, where he lived. He told me that he talked with a man in our church, Doug, who happened to have a car trailer and that Doug was ready and willing to drive it down to pick up his car.

Think about what that means. It means a four hour drive down to camp. It means a four hour drive back, along with a few others hours that come with the unexpected. But, Doug was willing to go and help this man out. He felt bad to have Doug drive the four hours and down and back, so I think that he made some other arrangements. I share that story, because I know that such is the character of Doug. I have always found him willing to do anything for anybody, because of his love for them.

When you are called upon at the most inconvenient time, how do you respond? Even this morning, I was called at an inconvenient time to come and help someone. I was stretched. It wasn't a problem for me. I passed the test. However, I don't always pass the test. There are times when our kids stretch my love. I often fail to stretch my love in their presence.

This is how Peter calls us to love. He calls us to stretch in our love for one another. Over in 1 Peter 4:8, he says the same thing, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." He calls us to extend beyond where we are comfortable. In doing so, Peter is merely calling us to love like Jesus called us to love.

Jesus told the story of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers and was stripped and beaten and left half dead (Luke 10:30). When a priest and a Levite saw this man along side of the road, they crossed over to the other side and kept on walking (Luke 10:31-32). But, when a Samaritan came upon this man, he felt compassion for him, bandaged up his wounds, put him on his beast, brought him to an inn and took care of him, even paying the expenses that came about as a result (Luke 10:33-36). This is stretching love. Have you loved like this? This is our call.

The third characteristic of genuine love we see in our text is ...

c. Authenticity

One final time, let's consider our text. "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another **from the heart**" (1 Peter 1:22).

My point comes from the last three words of this verse, "from the heart." With these words, Peter is getting at authenticity. He's talking about having a love that is deep-down genuine.

You can go to the lumberyard and purchase some boards. There are solid oak boards. And there are oak veneer boards. On the surface, they may look similar. But, once you get beyond the shell, only one is oak down to the core, it's the solid board. This is what Peter is talking about here. He's not talking about a veneer of love. He's talking about a genuine love that penetrates deep into the soul of your being.

These words here are proof of why regeneration is so necessary in genuine love, because our love for other needs to be authentic to the deep core of who we are. Since we are sinners by nature, we need to be transformed before we can genuinely love "from the heart."

Much that passes for love in our day and age really isn't love. Consider how most people use the term, "love." People may say, "I love my car." What they mean by this is, "I love the way in which my car makes me happy. It smells new. It accelerates quickly. It drives smoothly. It gets good gas mileage. And it makes me look cool."

People may say, "I love that television show." What they mean is, "I love the way in which that television show makes me happy. When I watch the show, I can put my brain on pause for an hour. The show is funny, so it makes me feel good. The plot is always interesting, so it keeps my attention. The lead actress is pretty and the lead actor is a hunk, which makes it pleasant to watch."

Many times, this same definition of love can pass over to our relationships. When a husband says, "I love my wife." What he may well mean is, "I love the way in which my wife makes me happy. She cooks all of our family meals, which I find very satisfying to my stomach. She cleans the house and makes it smell nice. She takes care of the kids. She makes sure that the kids get to and from school, soccer practice, AWANA, the birthday parties, and the field trips. When it's time for bed, she really makes me happy. I love my wife."

This isn't love. This is idolatry. You are trying to get from you wife what God alone will provide to you.

This idolatry is exposed once she stops doing any of these things. In such cases, the husband will get upset with her. "You want me to take Jimmy to the birthday party? But, tonight's bowling night. I promised my friends at work that I'd go out with them." And, an argument ensues. Suddenly, the love has stopped, because she is no longer making him happy, by requesting that he give up his night of bowling to spend it with the kids. It really wasn't love in the first place, it was idolatry. He was using her as another god to make him happy, and that's not love. That's not love from the heart. [\[1\]](#)

Love from the heart looks like this. "I love my wife. There is nothing more that I want in my life than for her to be happy. I will do anything to please my wife. I will clean up after the meals. I will vacuum and dust around the house. I will empty the dishwasher and do the laundry. Whenever possible, I will take the kids on all of their school activities. I'll make sure that I take good care of the house. I'll paint it when necessary. I'll seal the cracks. I'll fix the windows. I'll apply the weather stripping. At work, I will put forth 110%, so that I will be able to provide for her in every way. When we are cozy in bed, if she wants a window opened, I'll get out of bed and go open the window. If she wants the locks checked, I'll check the locks. If she wants a drink, I'll get her a drink. I exist to serve her. My happiness will come when I see her happy."

That's genuine, Biblical love. This is Ephesians 5:28-29, "Husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it." Anything else is idolatry, seeking satisfaction in what the other can do for you.

Among the brethren, Peter is calling us to a similar love. "Fervently love **one another** from the heart." This means that we ought to be think of how our existence is to make others happy. "I want to serve you and help you. Do you have a need? Let me do whatever I can to help you. My time is your time. I love you and want to serve you. I exist to make you happy."

That's what Peter calls us to this morning.

1. The Foundations of Genuine Love
 - a. **Regeneration**
 - b. **Obedience**
 - c. **Purity**
2. The Characteristics of Genuine Love
 - a. **Sincerity**
 - b. **Fervency**
 - c. **Authenticity**

Are these things true in you?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 4, 2007 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] I found Norm Wakefield's book, "Equipped To Love" especially helpful at this point. See page 20.