

## CARE for heaven's sake

*love one another*

[video] – American Idol contestant

A rare moment of caring on a tough show. I was very impressed by the way the three judges handled this kind, ambitious young woman.

I vividly remember my Mom's famous line as I was growing up. You see, I am the oldest of five kids. I am currently 30 years old and my youngest brother Ryan just turned 24 years old... so we are all very close together age-wise.

Jeremy is 30

Brad is 29

Dan is 27

Stacie is 25

Ryan is 24

Brad and I are 11 months apart. You know what that means? This is terrible for an older brother... My brother Brad is the same age as me for a whole month!! When we were growing up that used to really bother me. Anyway, Brad and I fought like crazy when we were kids. We yelled at each other, got in fights and wrestling matches, picked at each other, called one another names... pretty much never got along.

I can still hear my Mom saying this one phrase to us all the time... it is etched in my memory. My wonderful mother with a quiver in her voice would say: **WHY CAN'T YOU TWO JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!** She would say this whenever she got to the end of her rope with us: **WHY CAN'T YOU TWO JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

It's not that Brad and I didn't love each other... we just showed our love by beating and making fun of each other!

I wonder if God is ever like my Mom? I wonder as God looks upon our human interactions with each other, if He doesn't get to the end of His rope sometimes and says (with a booming, thunderous voice): **WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

Brothers and sisters

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

Husbands and wives

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

Grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, step-parents, step brother and sisters

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

Driver to driver, Wal-mart employee to customer, or customer to Wal-mart employee

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

Green Bay Packer fan to a New York Giant fan!

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

What about Republican or Democrat?  
Obama, Hillary, Edwards?  
McCain, Huckabee, Romney, Guiliani?

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

What about country to country?  
USA to Iran?  
China and Taiwan?  
India and Pakistan?  
France and everybody else?  
The different sides in the current conflict in Kenya?

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

I mean, I can just picture God throwing up His hands in constant frustration:

**I DIDN'T CREATE YOU FOR THIS!!  
I CREATED YOU FOR GOOD!  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU!!  
WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS FIGHTING WITH EACH OTHER?!**

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

You may be surprised to know that my brother Brad and I don't bicker and fight anymore... actually we are really good friends. Brad and his wife Alisha live in Oklahoma City, OK and both are feverishly working through graduate school—Brad is in law school, and Alisha is studying to be some kind of super-smart specialized doctor!

Our conversations on the phone and during visits are really fun now that we are adults. My Mom's vision for us has come true and her fear has subsided... **WE DO LOVE EACH OTHER!!** My Mom is so proud of us!!

Why do we love each other now that we are adults and we didn't show it very well when we were children? Simple... we grew up. We matured. We got smarter. We realized the stupid things we fought about when we were kids really don't matter...

We learned it doesn't really matter—

- Who is first in line
- Which seat in the car we each got
- If I share my favorite toy or prized possession

We learned to use words with each other more wisely (we realized which words hurt and stopped).

We learned that people's feelings really do get hurt if you do something on purpose.

Brad and I grew up... we are no longer terrible twos, whiny toddlers, mean kindergarteners, feisty elementary children, pre-pubescent adolescents, and ornery teenagers. We graduated into mature young adulthood.

And I imagine most of the adults in this room would say they have grown up too... for the most part (each to our own varying degrees). Most mature adults have moved past childhood infighting and mean words, right?

However, if I was still a "too-smart-for-my-own-good" teenager (maybe I still am a little)... I would point out this little discrepancy with the world—

## **It is really screwed up!!**

Didn't we just talk about how countries don't get along with other countries, and even people within those countries?

Aren't the people in charge of them ADULTS?

Is this the way each of us interact with people of other races?

Our spouse?

Our friends and neighbors?

What kind of example are we to our children? Or even to other people's children?

No wonder why God is saying to EVERYONE not just kids

**WHY CAN'T YOU ALL JUST LOVE EACH OTHER?!**

You know God has been saying this for quite some time all throughout human history...

In the story of Cain and Abel, God warns Cain of the nature of sin that was crouching at his door (Genesis 4:7). Did Cain listen?

Did Cain love his brother? Nope. He killed him.

Right before the biblical account of the FLOOD, "the Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5).

Were they loving each other? Nope. They were evil toward one another.

Jacob and Esau didn't love each other. In fact, Jacob's Mom, Rebekah, helped him to deceive his father, Isaac, in order to take his brother Esau's place of inheritance.

Any chance of loving each other in that home? Nope. Lot's of lying and deceiving.

Remember young Joseph? The one who told his father and 11 older brothers that they would eventually bow down to him? Trust me, if my younger brother would have said that... something bad would have happened to him too...

Did Joseph's brothers end up loving him? Nope. They sold him as a slave and told their dad that Joseph had been eaten by a wild animal. Not much love there!  
Was God happy with that? Nope.

You remember Moses? Leader of the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt? Well he didn't show much love earlier in his life. He took the law into his own hands when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. He killed that Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

Loving each other? Not a chance.

At this point, I really need to remind you that the reason God chose Abraham and the nation of Israel, was to create a special group of people who would show the world what the true God of heaven and earth was really like. Israel, God's people was to be the model humanity for the world.

Was Israel doing a good job at loving each other? Nope. Failing miserably.

I could cite many more biblical examples... everything from—

- Israel whining and complaining to Moses all the time while in the wilderness – NO LOVE
- To arguing and bickering among tribes in the book of Judges – NO LOVE
- King Saul trying repeatedly to kill soon-to-be king David – NO LOVE
- To King David's adultery with one of his army guy's wife and then having his army friend killed because his wife got pregnant – NO LOVE

Why is it that children usually grow up and mature past their child-hood disputes... and then become adults who do the exact same things to other people in their lives that they were supposed to grow out of? Interesting.

Maybe the adults and countries of this world are just acting out typical middle school behaviors—

- **Forming cliques where exclusion is definitional**

- My religion is the right one... if you don't follow what I believe, we are going to kill you! The active relational concept of: "who's in and who's out!"
- My political views are the right one... if you don't follow them, then to "the-bad-place" with you! (*we are critical of the Middle East and their religious forms of government, but are we mature enough to be self-critical of how we do things and how we act toward one another about it?*)
  - *This side of the aisle? Or that side of the aisle?*

Another middle school behavior...

- **The pattern of retaliation**—you do this to me, then I will do this to you... or pre-emptive retaliation—it looked like you were going to do this to me, so I did something to stop you from eventually doing this to me
  - Honestly, would you let your children get away with that?
    - "But Dad, he was acting like he was going to take my Game Boy Advance away from me so I punched him in the gut so he wouldn't even think about it!"
    - "But Mom, I only put gum in her hair because she looked like she was going to say something bad about me!"

As I continually study developmental behavior and trends (mostly to stay current on children and youth issues overall), I look at how adults and countries and systems in this world think and behave and I can't help but laugh at how juvenile we all are! It's funny... but REALLY it is sad.

In 1 John 3:11 we find: "This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another." Wow... God really does want everyone to love one another.

Pastor Mark asked me to preach on this topic of CARE for heaven's sake. As soon as I heard him say that phrase, I immediately thought of my Mom's famous line... and then I wondered if God ever thinks like that... and then I wondered what God revealed in the Bible thinks about us loving each other. We already mentioned quite a few inferences of getting along in love with each other in the Old Testament stories. But the commands of God to get along, to LOVE EACH OTHER, are far more explicit, far more clear in the New Testament.

Jesus said: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

Paul writes: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10).

"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited" (Romans 12:16).

"Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way" (Romans 14:13).

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Romans 15:17).

Here's a fun one to try sometime:

"Greet one another with a holy kiss..." (Romans 16:16). All the teenagers are like yeah...I'm bringing that girl or boy I like next week to church!

"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

This is one my Mom made us memorize when I was 2 years old:

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16).

"But encourage one another daily..." (Hebrews 3:13).

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

"Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

"Brothers, do not slander one another" (James 4:11).

"Finally all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble" (1 Peter 3:8).

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9).

"But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

"No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:12).

In the sheer volume of commands to \_\_\_\_\_ one another, one can almost hear God screaming to his creation: LOVE EACH OTHER!! CARE! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE. THAT'S WHAT THIS WORLD NEEDS... PEOPLE LIKE MY SON, Jesus, WHO CARE FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE!

Serve one another  
Accept one another  
Live in harmony with one another

**WHY?! Because the world needs examples of what God really wants!**

Love one another  
Be devoted to one another  
Honor one another  
Stop passing judgment on one another  
Greet one another  
Agree with one another  
Bear with one another in love  
Be kind and compassionate with one another... forgiving one another

**WHY?! Because we are Christians for heaven's sake!  
That means we are supposed to look like Jesus!**

Teach and admonish one another  
Encourage one another  
Spur one another toward love and good deeds  
Don't give up meeting together  
Don't slander one another  
Be sympathetic with one another  
Be humble with one another  
Offer hospitality to one another  
Fellowship with one another

**God wants people who from their gut recognize hurting people and care.  
God wants people who are so caught up in the kind of world God wants that they continually care about the people who they know and even the people they don't.**

[The Modern Day Parable of the Good Samaritan]

I want to share a story with you that I heard from a friend of mine named Luke.

One night last week there was a poor old man walking home from Wal-mart. I think he actually lived just on the other side of Lake Hayward. On his way home he was attacked by group of gang members who took his money and proceeded to beat him till he was bloody and almost unrecognizable. To make matters worse the gang thought it would be funny to steal what was left of his tattered clothing and the few groceries he had bought.

Broken, bloody and bruised, the poor old man lay in the cold snow bank along the side of Railroad Street (just on his way home...). Luckily a local minister was on his way home that night, but when he saw the man in the snow bank, he averted his eyes and took a short cut home, telling himself it wasn't as bad as it looked.

Next a wealthy philanthropist passed by. As she passed she slowed her car and turned her lights directly on the half dead man—she gawked at the gruesome sight. "I cannot help this man, she told herself, what if he hurts me..., I'll just call someone to help" and she continued on her way, but eventually forgot to call for help.

The man's situation was growing bleak he could hardly call out for help and his limbs were starting to freeze from the icy weather. Around 2 am a gruff bar fellow was walking... on his way home from a local tavern. When he came upon the half dead man his heart went out to him. He instantly dropped beside the man and began to wipe his wounds. He didn't have much on, but he pulled off his jacket and wrapped it snugly around the half dead man. He quickly realized that the man needed medical attention, but he had no means to getting him to the hospital, other than walking. So he hoisted the man on to his shoulder and began the long walk along Hwy 77 to the hospital. With bitter cold winds ice conditions the walking went terribly slow, but eventually they made it.

The Nurses and Doctors attended to the poor old man immediately. The gruff bar fellow waited until the nurses told him the injured man would be okay and then proceeded to leave. As he left he pull out a wad of crumbed one's and twenty's (it was all he had to his name) he shoved it in the nurses hand and muttered something like "put this towards his bills..."

Who should we love?

This church... more than any other I have ever been a part of, does a fantastic job at caring... I think one of the major reasons why is Pastor Mark. The Jesus-person that Pastor Mark is, is always telling us to love and care... care unconditionally for those around. Honestly... can you think of any kind of person Mark would ever be mean to? No way! There isn't a mean bone in Mark's body—it's the Jesus inside of him.

Couple of things I have learned from Pastor Mark—

- 1) Never be too busy to care – Jesus showed compassion even at the worst of times in his life
- 2) Pay attention to the three levels in your life:

It is important to note that one does need to take care of oneself, then those immediately around him or her, and then to the world at-large. In Christians, self-care is often neglected under the guise of serving other people. We need to remember that natural consequences are still natural consequences. If we lack in a certain area of self-care (whether it is emotional, physical, spiritual, etc) then any impact for God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven will be non-existent. In the same token, care for those intimate relationships around us (marital, deep friendships, parental, etc) is also important to be able to bring to the world at-large health and wholeness.

So don't be too busy to care... and care for yourself, your family and friends, and the community all around you.

The story of the beaten up man on Railroad Street is found in Luke's gospel... Luke's account of the story of Jesus. Jesus told this story in response to a question he received: "Who is our neighbor?" and: "Should we love that neighbor?"

Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan which got the attention of the crowd. However, the most striking thing about this story is not the scandal of a Samaritan helping, rather than a Jew... or a gruff bar fellow, rather than a pastor... The most striking thing is the last thing Jesus said after telling the story. He said: "Go and do likewise."

In other words, Jesus was saying not to embrace just a good, catching story... but GO AND DO IT! GO PRACTICE LOVING EACH OTHER. So my closing words are the same to you this morning... Go and do likewise. Go and practice loving each other... and by practicing, you will show the world what God is really like.

Let's pray...