

Called to give love

What it means to share God's love



What does love look like?

We hear a lot of talk about love, don't we? Truth be told, we probably contribute to the talk. From "I just *love* that sweater" to "Don't you just *love* that show?" to "I totally *love* him/her/it (fill in the blank). We know when we say such things that we are not really speaking of love. Not real love. Real love, the sort of love that God is, and which we are to share with others looks very different from such meager expressions, does it not?

Real love looks like a parent who sets aside time every night to help a child who struggles to read with his homework. Real love looks a like a

The message

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nurse who stays an extra hour with a patient who is fearful of the surgery that will take place tomorrow. Real love looks like the business person who sets aside a portion of her paycheck before it goes into her bank account to give to the local food pantry. Real love is patient, kind, not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. "It does not insist on

its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Real love never ends. (see 1 Cor 13:4-8)

Are we really meant to love so totally? It is difficult for us to imagine living in such a totally giving, perfectly loving way. We can only begin to do so with the help and presence of the Holy Spirit, after all. But yes, we are meant to love. That is who God is, and as people who have been baptized into Christ's Body, we are called to give, to be love, as God is love. We might say we are meant to be stewards of God's love.

A reminder, and a connection. Remember, stewardship is a way of living that reminds us that everything we have, are and will be is from our good and gracious God. We are called to be caretakers of these many gifts, to nurture them to grow within us, and to share them with others out of gratitude for all we have been given. Apply this to love, and we begin to see that real love is the foundation, purpose and meaning of our lives. We are created in and given great love, and so are called to share love greatly.

We know this! We are called to love God and love our neighbor above all else. We learn about this sort of love from Jesus and the truly loving people in our lives. When we ponder their way

of interacting with others, we recognize that their focus is not on themselves. Their focus is on God first, then others. That is the first key to this God-like loving: real love is pointed at the other. It isn't about "me." It is about someone beyond me.



The challenge: Being good stewards of God's love calls us *beyond* ourselves, even though much of our surrounding culture tells us that the goal of our life is to find love *for* ourselves. If we begin there, we will never find real love.

Let's get practical. Real love begins by pointing our gaze toward God and others and continues in giving beyond what we might consider possible. We will explore practical steps toward this loving way of living on the reverse of this sheet.

Let's be spiritual. Being rooted in a loving relationship with God, we will see that real love surrounds us! Our daily interactions with others will look more like real love, which never ends.

- Leisa Anslinger

Practical ways to grow as good stewards

Love and be loved.

Jesus teaches us that love is the foundation of all we are. Let us look to Jesus' words and life for practical guidance for our living.



Love God: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first commandment." (Mt 34:37-38) Loving God in this way will call us to put God first above all else. Set aside time to be with God, to grow

in God's mercy and goodness, to know that God's love is real.

Love Neighbor: "And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Mt 34:39) Loving our neighbor is not always the first thing on our minds or in our actions, is it? Not only does Jesus teach us to love those who are easy to love, he tells us we must love those who hate us, persecute us, and those who are our enemies. Pray for them all; pray especially for those who are in need; God's grace will strengthen you to do so.

Act Out of Love: Love is not passive. Love is actually very active: "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and

you visited me." (Mt 25:34b-36) Look beyond yourself a little more each day. Seek out ways to give love, and eventually this will become your perspective and way of life.

Be a Good Steward of Love: Take time each day to recall the many ways in which you have been blessed by the love of God and love of others. Receiving love with gratitude leads to being good stewards of love.

Love as We Have Been Taught: Jesus drew on the wisdom of the Jewish tradition for his life and teaching. Likewise, we draw on all of the wisdom found in Sacred Scripture and our Tradition. "He has told you, O mortal, what is good and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic 6:8) Walking humbly with our God will naturally lead to a life filled with love, freely given and received.

HOW ARE YOU A GOOD STEWARD?

We are already stewards, whether we are conscious of it or not. We will always have ways to grow as stewards, too, aspects of our lives in which we don't care or share as readily as we should. How are you already living as a good steward? What areas of your life need attention in order to grow as a steward in the coming year? Use this space to record your thoughts and your commitment for the future:



After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (Jn 13:12-14)