

01 – THE CHRISTIAN’S GREAT QUEST

- ✓ I want to begin this series with a question. (Don’t answer out loud. Just answer in your own heart.) Are you ready? Here’s the question: “What’s your #1 goal in life?” Some of you may have said, “To get married and have children.” Or maybe, “To make a lot of money”. Or “to accomplish something great for God”. (I’m sure whatever you picked was a worthwhile goal.)

- ✓ Paul came up with one (in 1 Cor.) that, honestly, most of us wouldn’t have thought of. He’s just finished writing the great “Love Chapter”, and he says this:

1 Cor. 14:1 – “Eagerly pursue and seek to develop this love. Make it your aim, your great quest.”

- ✓ What was Paul’s “Great Quest” in life? To develop the love of God in his heart (Ro. 5:5). Why would Paul consider that to be his #1 goal? Let me suggest a few reasons.

Why Should Love Be Our Great Quest?

1.) In the NT, Love Is Our Only Commandment

John 13:34 – “I’m giving you a new commandment: Love each other in the same way that I’ve loved you ... “

- ✓ God took the 613 commandments of the OT and replaced them with just one. (That *one* commandment replaced everything else.) How could He do that?

Rom. 13:9-10 – “When you love others, you fulfill what the law has been after all along. The Law Code: Don’t sleep with another person’s spouse, don’t take someone’s life, don’t take what isn’t yours ... and any other ‘don’t’ you can think of – it’s summed up in this one statement: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to others, so love fulfills everything the law requires.”

- ✓ What Paul is saying is – all of the ‘don’ts’ of the OT have been replaced by one big ‘do’! *Do* love! If you just do *that*, you’ll fulfill the entire Law. (Think About It: If I love you, I’m not going to kill you. I’m not going to sleep with your wife. I’m not going to take your stuff. If I’ll just focus on love, the rest of the commandments take care of themselves.)

2.) It’s Probably the Greatest Evangelism Tool That We Have

John 13:34b-35 – “Love each other in the same way that I’ve loved you. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.”

- ✓ That was Jesus’ plan! That the world would see a group of people that had been transformed by love. (“Look how they love each other! Unconditionally. Sacrificially. They lay down their lives for each other!”) If the world ever saw that kind of love, they’d be beating our door down!
- ✓ People are starving for love! That’s why they go from relationship to relationship, bedroom to bedroom, and marriage to marriage. I’ll say it again. If unbelievers saw the church as a place where they could experience that kind of love, we wouldn’t have enough room in our churches. Why is love our great quest? Because the world desperately needs to see a love like that.

3.) Our Eternal Rewards Depend On It

1 Cor. 13:1-3 – “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as noisy gong, or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be martyred, and have not love, it profits me nothing.”

- ✓ Do you know what Paul just described? Super-Christian! Look at this

fellow's resume. He speaks with the tongues of angels. (It's so beautiful!). He prophesies (and he can "read your mail"). He has all knowledge – (he knows the Bible from Genesis to maps.) He has faith that moves mountains. (The walls at his church are lined with crutches and wheelchairs.) He did what the rich young ruler wouldn't do. He gave away everything he had! And, finally, he was martyred!

- ✓ If he lived in our day, do you know what we'd do? We'd name a denomination after him! But when he stands before God, according to the Bible, he's getting no reward. None. Zero. Nada. (That should be a wake-up call for all of us.) Love isn't one "area" that we'll be judged on. *Everything* will be filtered through that one thing: Was love the motive?

4.) Answered Prayer Depends on It – (Gal. 5:6)

- ✓ Or to say it another way: **Faith only works in an atmosphere of love.** (If you're walking in strife, you can forget getting your prayers answered.) Need proof of that? (1 Peter 3:7)

5.) Love Can Make a Tremendous Impact

- ✓ A small act of love can change someone's life.

Newspaper Article (ESPN)

They played the oddest game in high school football history last month down in Grapevine, Texas. It was "Grapevine Faith" vs. "Gainesville State" and everything about it was upside down.

For instance, when Gainesville Correctional came out to take the field, the Christian School fans made a 40-yard spirit line for the Correctional School's Players to run through. Did you hear that? The Other Team's fans! They even made a banner for players to crash through at the end. It said, "Go Tornadoes!" Which is also weird, because (the Christian School's) Team is the "Lions".

It was rivers running uphill and cats petting dogs. More than 200 Faith fans sat on the Gainesville side and kept cheering the Gainesville players on—by name.

This all started when Faith's head coach, Kris Hogan, wanted to do something kind for the Gainesville team. Faith had never played Gainesville, but he already knew the score. After all, Faith was 7-2 going into the game, Gainesville 0-8 with only 2 TDs all year.

Faith has 70 players, 11 coaches, the latest equipment and involved parents. Gainesville has a lot of kids with convictions for drugs, assault and robbery—many of whose families had disowned them—wearing seven-year-old shoulder pads and ancient helmets.

So, Hogan had this idea. What if half of our fans—for one night only—cheered for the other team? He sent out an email asking the Faithful to do just that. "Here's the message I want you to send:" Hogan wrote. "You are just as valuable as any other person on planet Earth."

Some people were naturally confused. One Faith player walked into Hogan's office and asked, "Coach, why are we doing this?" And Hogan said, "Imagine if you didn't have a home life. Imagine if everybody had pretty much given up on you. Now imagine what it would mean for hundreds of people to suddenly believe in you."

Next thing you know, the Gainesville Tornadoes were turning around on their bench to see something they had never seen before. Hundreds of fans. And actual cheerleaders!

"I thought maybe they were confused," said Alex, a Gainesville lineman (only first names are released by the prison). "They started yelling 'DEE-fense!' when their team had the ball. I said, 'What? Why they cheerin' for us?'"

It was a strange experience for boys who most people cross the street to avoid. "We can tell people are a little afraid of us when we come to the games," says Gerald, a lineman who will wind up doing more than three years. "You can see it in their eyes. They're lookin' at us like we're

criminals. But these people, they were yellin' for us! By our names!" It was that way all night, with Faith parents encouraging players to tackle their sons, and with Faith teachers ... rooting for ... the visiting team. The Correctional school's superintendent, talked from her seat about the players' excitement she could see throughout the game, and about how she appreciated Faith Christian making it possible for the team, for one game, to feel like any other high school football team. She was interrupted by a touchdown.

It was the Tornadoes' second touchdown of the night. Before this game, they had only scored two all season. But tonight, the Tornadoes had reached the end zone twice. Their fans for a night cheered. Players looked toward their stands as they came off the field and raised their index fingers. They may not have been No. 1, but they felt like they were.

After the game, both teams gathered in the middle of the field to pray and that's when Gainesville's Quarterback surprised everybody by asking to lead. "We had no idea what the kid was going to say," remembers Coach Hogan. But he said this: "Lord, I don't know how this happened, so I don't know how to say thank You, but I never would've known there was so many people in the world that cared about us." And it was a good thing everybody's heads were bowed because they might've seen Hogan wiping away tears.

As the Tornadoes walked back to their bus under guard, they each were handed a bag for the ride home – a burger, some fries, a soda, some candy, a Bible and an encouraging letter from a Faith player. The Gainesville coach saw Hogan, grabbed him hard by the shoulders and said, "You'll never know what your people did for these kids tonight. You'll never, ever know."

And as the bus pulled away, all the Gainesville players crammed to one side and pressed their hands to the window, staring at these people they'd never met before, watching their waves and smiles disappearing into the night.

Anyway, with the economy six feet under and Christmas running on about three and a half reindeer, it's nice to know that one of the best presents you can give is still absolutely free – hope.