

## Open Hearts By Russ Earl

In 2 Corinthians 12:15 Paul writes: "*And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.*" Paul had the best attitude a Christian could have. He loved other brethren so much that he was no longer concerned about himself, but them only. Another statement like this was in 2 Corinthians 6:11-12 where Paul wrote "*O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.*" His heart was open to them; he truly desired that they should be right with God.

Brotherly love is a mark of true discipleship. If we are a faithful follower of Christ, then we will be kind and loving to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. By showing our love to them, they may also see Christ in us. We will also help them as much as possible during times of need.

Brotherly love is also a mark of spiritual growth. Those who are young in the faith some times do not understand the need for brotherly love and the purpose of it. A mature heart reaches out to those in need, while an immature heart is restricted and does not reach out to others.

So why do some have restricted hearts? Some because of laziness. Many wait and let others do the visiting, and are not concerned about maintaining a good relationship with our fellow brethren. If we love Christ and follow His example, then we will be concerned about our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Others fear because they may not have ever had a true conversation with that person before. This is true sometimes, but we shouldn't let it be the case. We should strive to get to know all our faithful brothers and sisters. This way, when they need us, we will not feel odd when we visit them, or when we approach them at services.

How does a person overcome these things and love as they should? We let the Bible be our example. From men like Paul, he loved the brethren dearly and put them above himself. We should increase more and more in love as Peter said in 2 Peter 1:8. We are to abound in love and that love should be towards our brethren.

Love takes time. It takes time to get to know one another. It takes time to find out how our brother or sister is doing. We must have the patience to sit down and talk with our brothers and sisters in Christ, so that we can grow to love them more.

Why is brotherly love necessary? We all need encouragement! One way we can encourage one another is to have love one for another. When we show someone that we love them and that we care about how they are doing, it is encouraging. It's encouraging to know that others do care about us and how we are doing, if we need prayers, or a visit from the elders. If we love one another then we know the state that our brothers and sisters in Christ are in.

We should have abundant love one for another as Paul did for the Corinthian brethren (2 Corinthians 2:4). We should show our love towards others by helping them in their time of need (2 Corinthians 8:24). Let us not grow weary in doing good. We should love our brethren so that in times of need we may be there for one another. We should love our brothers and sisters because we are all like-minded, of the same faith and love the same Lord, Christ Jesus.

We must show our brothers and sisters that we love them. We should show it by sincerely inquiring of them. We should know their needs, their prayer requests and know them more personally than others because they are of the Lord's church. Let us not overlook our own brethren but instead put their needs above our own.