

# A Love That Lifts Others Up Above You Series

Contributed by Dr. Madana Kumar, Phd on May 7, 2021

Scripture: 1 John 4:16, 1 Samuel 16:21, 1 Samuel 18:7, Acts 9:22-31, Acts 4:36-37, John 21:15-17

Denomination: Evangelical/Non-Denominational

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## Summary: Love and Fresh air is not free anymore. Can we love in a such a manner that makes another person better than ourselves?

A Love that lifts others up above you

You must have heard the saying " You can't live on love and fresh air alone". The underlying assumption behind this saying is that they are the only two things that are available free. Let us look at it in the context of today. Newspapers are full of stories of people gasping for oxygen, something that is supposed to be available freely in fresh air. The air pollution in Delhi for quite a number of years that we cannot take fresh air for granted. COVID has proven to us that it is true. We cannot take fresh air for granted.

How about love? Is it free anymore? Is it available when we need it the most?

The theme for today is "God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him". 1 John 4:16

What does abiding in love mean? How do we demonstrate that we abide in love? Especially during these difficult times for everybody? That is what we will study today. I have titled the message "A love that lifts others up above you".

Love is a loosely used term now-a-days. We are used to people saying, "oh, I love that" without blinking an eyelid. Celebrities flaunt the "love you" term to send their fans into a frenzy. On a lighter note, spouses use the L word to get out of trouble many a times. But what does love really mean? How do we know that the love we profess to someone is not shaky?

Let us look at a couple of examples from the Bible. Let us look at the story of Saul and David in the old testament. It was in a way, love at first sight. Bible records 1 Samuel 16:21 (NKJV) 21 So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer. This love of Saul for David continued strong, as long as David's actions helped Saul. When David played the harp, Saul would get well and refreshed. When Goliath was troubling Israelites, David killed him and saved Saul's throne and pride. All was good till something happened that upset Saul. People started seeing that David is better. It got worse in 1 Samuel 18:7 (NKJV) 7 So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." The Bible says, this made Saul angry and from that point onwards all the love that Saul had for David vanished into thin air and it became hatred so strong that Saul wanted to kill David.

You might have heard of the term "fair-weather-friend". Someone who is a friend when all is well. But that friendship, that love disappears at the slightest apprehension that you might become a threat to him/her. This is what happened between Saul and David. As long as David's actions were beneficial to Saul, Saul loved him, but the moment people praised David more than Saul, that love became hatred.

Saul could just not digest the fact that a wild jungle boy whom he brought into the palace, who he gave a place at the table, who he gave an opportunity to serve in the army, could become better than himself. His love was temporary.

Let us look at the story of another Saul in the new testament. Please refer to the first reading for today taken from Acts 9:22-31. We see an interesting story unfolding here. Saul is converted in the most dramatic fashion and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ and starts preaching the Gospel. He then reaches Jerusalem and wants to meet the Apostles. The Bible categorically states that the apostles were all afraid of Saul (Acts 9:22). This is natural. I would have been afraid too. This is someone who was going around arresting and persecuting Christians till very recently and now suddenly he claims to be a Christian and wants to fellowship with the Apostles. So they had their apprehensions and were not too sure. It was Barnabas takes on this onerous responsibility of standing guarantee for Saul who had not yet established his credentials as a Christian, let alone as an apostle. It was Barnabas who explained the situation to the apostles and persuaded them to have a meeting with the Saul. The rest is history. Barnabas however does not stop with this act. He accompanies Saul, (who becomes Paul) in his early ministry journeys. We all know who among them is more famous, more remembered, more talked about today. And we do not read about Barnabas having any issue with Paul becoming better than him.

This should not be surprising to us. Barnabas is first introduced to us in Acts 4:36-37 (NKJV) as the "Son of encouragement", and as some who is generous with money.

Compare these two stories again. The story of the old testament Saul Vs David and the story of Barnabas vs New testament Saul. King Saul could not digest the thought that his apprentice could become better than him. Barnabas had no problem investing in the life of Paul and let him become bigger and better. This is true love. A love that makes you invest in the life of another person to the extent that the other person becomes better, bigger, wiser, richer, healthier, wealthier, happier, more famous than yourselves. I would like us to pause for a moment and reflect on how we measure up to this definition of true love. A love that lifts others above us.

Jesus is the perfect example of how such a love can be demonstrated. His love extended to the cross. And he is asking us this morning to abide in Him by loving one another. In John 21:15-17, Jesus asks Peter thrice, "Do you love me?" all three times Peter answers affirmatively, the third time a bit more aggressively, may be. But each time Peter affirms his love for Jesus, Jesus directed him to take care of His sheep. All of us know that Jesus used the term sheep for his followers. His command to Peter applies to us today. There are several people suffering out there. Can we show that we abide in the love of God by lifting someone above us? By investing in someone's life so that the other person becomes better, bigger, wiser, richer, happier, healthier, wealthier and more famous than ourselves?

Let us Pray

You can watch a video of this sermon at <https://youtu.be/VfLITWSY-X4>