

## Genuine Love and the Problem of Pretending

1 Peter 1:22-23

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Last week 1 Peter challenged us to engage the intellect, to “gird up the loins of our mind.” We learned that being a Christ follower doesn’t mean leaving your brain at the door! In fact, we’re called to do some heavy lifting when it comes to our understanding of God, the Gospel, and the purpose of our lives in this world.

Next comes the call to love. Christian faith is never just a matter of mental gymnastics or abstract discussions of theology. We are called to live by the “logic” of the Gospel. But the logic of the Gospel always leads directly to practical application in daily life. The logic of the Gospel always leads us to love.

1 Peter 1:22 turns a corner. Peter gathers up the deep truth presented in chapter 1 and shows us where it leads us. With this verse we are put on alert. Our calling as Christians isn’t just about our individual experience of Christ. It starts with that, but it is way bigger. God is building a community of believers who will shine as His light in a dark world. That’s what it means to be God’s people on mission. Here is quality number one of this community of Christ: love – genuine love, sincere love. This passage teaches us several crucial lessons in this regard.

For one thing, living in relationships of genuine love will never happen without lots of effort. That’s why so many passages in the New Testament plead with us to work hard at sincere love. This is a huge part of what it means to “grow up” into our salvation.

We also learn that living in sincere love goes counter to our “natural” inclinations. The list of vices in 1 Peter 2:1 is intense. These were qualities Peter’s readers knew all too well in their culture, and in their own past behavior. Peter knows we can pretend to love, but that will never do.

Thankfully, Peter clearly shows us the resources that God gives us to live a life of genuine love. In fact, what Peter says in this regard is stunning in its power! Let’s open our hearts to God’s Word and God’s Spirit as we study this passage today.