**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, August 17, 2020**

Good afternoon!

Have you ever experienced real and lasting love? Over the years as a minister, I have been blessed to officiate over many wedding ceremonies. Watching and listening to couples express their love for each other is very special and moving at times. I have had couples say their vows to one another, have heard others sing their vows to one another and at times even witnessed some weeping their vows to one another. Regardless, it was all an effort to express their real love for each other for the rest of their lives! However, the very first wedding I did was just a bit different. Being new at this at the time, I was a little nervous. As the bride was repeating after me the vows that I was relating to her, I accidentally said at one point, “to have and to hold until DAY to us part” instead of until DEATH do us part. The bride who was as nervous as me evidently, repeated the phrase the same way! We both stared at each other for that moment thinking, that’s not right! Just as I was figuring out what to do next and how to fix the statement a man on the front pew of the packed church yelled out, “not a bad deal, you can try being married until midnight and see if you like it, and if not you are off the hook!” Well with that everyone broke out in laughter! This provided an opportunity to restate the vow correctly and move on! Wheeew!

Experiencing real and lasting love happens with some folks and not with others. However, when Jesus is part of the covenant partnership with you it will never be until day do us part, but always until death do us part. Romans 8:38-39 tells us that nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ!

In John 13:34-35, Jesus says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Experiencing real and lasting love...

1. Begins with “Love for one another. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you.” 58 times outside the gospels the phrase “one another” is used. Honor one another, be devoted to one another, accept one another, serve one another, submit to one another, encourage one another, and more. But the one that is the foundation of all of the rest is “love one another.” Love explains the rest! Love is the basis of the rest. If you don’t have love you won’t have the rest! I Peter 4:8 says, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another.” You know we sing about love, (remember the song: The Power Of Love by Huey Lewis – featured in the movie Back To The Future?). We talk about love, preach about love, pray about love and more. But the power of love is in the demonstration of love! Jesus tells us to love one another “even as I have loved you.” In other words, more than the old commandment of “love your neighbor as yourself.” Now love one another more than yourself, just as I have loved you! I John 3:1 says, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.” The KJV puts it this way, “Behold what manner of love.” The Greek here means “of what country!” God’s love is so unique, unusual and beyond us here on earth it is out of this world!

2. Finishes with love for all men. “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 3:16 a very popular verse says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Just what kind of people does God love? God does not just love good people or bad people or indifferent people. God loves all people! His love is unconditional. That’s why He gave His only begotten Son to die for all the world so that none would have to perish but could have everlasting life. John 3:16 needs to be more than a bumper sticker on the back of our cars, or a sign being held up on a street corner or in the stands of a baseball game for the cameras to notice. Our love for one another needs to be experienced by others in our actions and attitudes as Christians! This is truly experiencing a real and lasting love!

Hope all had a great weekend,

Mike