

GOD HAS ALWAYS beautifully pursued those far from Him. We did not ascend to glory and find Him. He left glory, became flesh, and dwelt among us—the ungrateful and evil. He declared His mission “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10 NIV).

We who love Jesus are to join Him on this mission. Jesus said:

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. . . . Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil” (6:27-28, 35 NKJV).

Jesus excels in taking grace and mercy to bottomless extremes—and calls us to do the same—sometimes causing our flesh to cry out, “Insanity!”

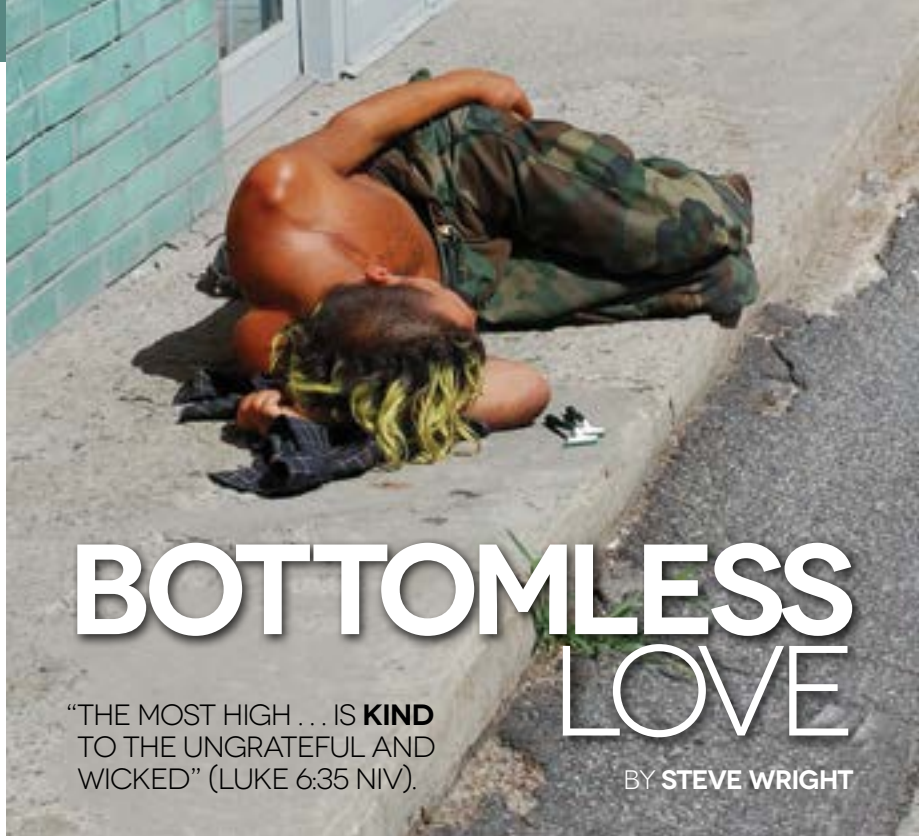
I used to pastor in San Francisco. One Sunday, a man dressed in a woman’s mesh skirt that was utterly transparent was sitting with his lover, waiting on church service to begin. His skirt left nothing to the imagination. I approached him and asked, “Do you intend to cover yourself for service?”

He sat quietly looking at me, so I asked him again, “Do you intend to cover yourself for service?”

He finally responded, “Are you going to kick me out of church?”

I let him know that everyone is welcome in God’s house, but there is a reverence for God and a respect for other people that must be followed. I added that children were present, and they should not have to observe what I was seeing.

The man finally agreed with me and told me he would cover up. I preached on God’s unconditional love that morning, and my heart burned with compassion for this broken man. When I gave the altar call, many came forward, and then I noticed something unusual.



BOTTOMLESS LOVE

“THE MOST HIGH . . . IS KIND TO THE UNGRATEFUL AND WICKED” (LUKE 6:35 NIV).

BY STEVE WRIGHT

The man with the mesh skirt wanted to come, but his partner was holding him back. I made my way to their seats, and grabbed their hands to pull them apart. I looked into the eyes of his companion and said, “You might not be ready for Jesus, but he is, so let him go.” The man followed me to the altar, where he accepted Christ into his life.

LIGHT AND SALT

To demonstrate love in an antagonistic world is challenging. It takes the supernatural leading of the Holy Spirit. As Christ-followers, we should be concerned primarily with being light and salt, not cursing the darkness.

Cursing the darkness is throwing condemnation at those who are outside of Christ, while *being light in the darkness* means awakening sinners from their sleep.

The first is done in the same spirit for which Jesus rebuked James and John when they wanted to call fire down on those who rejected Jesus (see Luke 9:54-56). The latter is done in the Spirit of love, recognizing those outside of Christ are under condemnation already, and we have no need to throw more their way (see John 3:18).

If we are to win lost people to Christ, we must do so in the greatest power known

to humanity, which is the love of God, who is kind to the ungrateful and evil.

Hate never reached or rescued anyone, but love has proven time and again to rescue the most hardened heart. Jesus died to prove love is real. We are called to do more than talk about grace; we are called to demonstrate it.

In Ephesians 5:11, we are told to have nothing to do with “unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (NKJV). We expose evil deeds by letting our light shine, not by trying to curse the darkness and win a religious argument.

LIKE JESUS

When we love like Christ, His light shines and awakens the sleeper from death to life (vv. 13-14). In the words of N. T. Wright, “Think of the best thing you can do for the worst person, and go ahead and do it.”

When we serve the ungrateful and evil, when we are kind and loving to them, we are serving Jesus. Jesus will one day say to us, “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25:40 NKJV). ☐

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