



## **Living Love Through Intentional Contact: The “C” in PACE**

Let us reflect deeply on the words of 1 John 3:18:

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

This verse is more than a gentle reminder, it's a profound call to action. As followers of Jesus, we are not merely invited to speak of love but to demonstrate it with our lives. Words, while powerful, can become hollow without the weight of action behind them.

Promises are easy. Intentions can be noble. But true Christian love, the kind that mirrors Jesus Christ, is not just spoken; it is lived out through action, consistency, and sincerity. When we look at the life of Jesus, we don't see a man who merely preached love from the pulpit or synagogue steps. We see a Savior who embodied love in every interaction. He touched lepers when no one else would. He fed the hungry crowds. He welcomed tax collectors and sinners. He wept with the grieving. He healed the sick. He forgave the fallen. And ultimately, He laid down His life for us all.

As lay pastors, this example should strike a deep chord within us. We are not professionals cloistered in church offices; we are shepherds embedded in the everyday lives of God's people. And it is in that day-to-day context that the call to “love in action and in truth” becomes urgent and essential.

Melvin Steinbron, a pioneer of the lay pastor movement, understood this profoundly. In his book *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?*, Steinbron emphasizes that the work of pastoral care does not rest solely on the shoulders of clergy. Instead, he casts a vision for every believer, especially lay leaders, to be involved in the spiritual care and shepherding of others. For him, lay pastors are not second-tier ministers. They are front-line agents of God's love in action.

One of Steinbron's core convictions was the importance of intentional Christian contact. That means not waiting for people to come to you with their needs, but actively seeking them out. It's about walking the extra mile to call, visit, pray with, or listen to someone. It's about checking in, not just during a crisis but consistently, because love is not a reaction, it's a lifestyle.

Loving “in truth” means our care is sincere. It is not for show. It's not to boost our image or reputation in the church community. It is rooted in the very character of God, who is love. It means we go beyond surface-level kindness and enter into the real, sometimes messy, lives of others with compassion and grace. We don't love people to earn their favor or to win approval. We love them because Christ first loved us.

And loving “with actions” means putting feet to our faith. It's easy to say, “I'll pray for you,” and then forget. But when someone shares a burden, we stop right then, wherever we are, and pray with them. It means showing up when it's inconvenient, offering help when it costs us something, and being present when others walk through the valleys of life.

As lay pastors, we must ask ourselves daily: How am I showing God's love today? Am I

being intentional in connecting with the people God has entrusted to me? Do I notice when someone hasn't been around or is hurting in silence? Do I make the effort to reach out, or am I waiting for someone else to do it?

Christian leadership is not about being perfect; it's about being faithful. It's about allowing God's love to flow through us in real, tangible ways. Whether we're leading a small group, checking in with a church member, writing a note of encouragement, or having a cup of coffee with someone who's struggling, we are making the love of Christ visible.

In the end, our lives should echo the truth of 1 John 3:18. Let our love not be confined to words, but proven in action. Let us love in truth, not just intention. And let us commit, as Melvin Steinbron encouraged, to making intentional Christian contacts that reflect the heart of the Good Shepherd.

Today, ask God to show you someone who needs your attention. Ask Him to give you the courage to reach out. And then, go. Because real love doesn't wait to be convenient. Real love shows up.