**Lessons from a Lockdown**

**Volume II**

Rommel J. Casis

**Day 72**

**1 John 3:16-18**

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. Who is my role model when it comes to love? Who do I imitate to be more loving? Why?
2. How am I laying down my life for my brothers and sisters? Based on Jesus’ standard, who am I loving?
3. What kind of person is difficult for me to love? In what situations is it difficult for me to love? Why?
4. What material possessions can I share with my needy brothers and sisters? How can I help them spiritually?
5. What are my acts of love during this pandemic?

***Insight:***

Love is a popular topic for books, movies and other forms of media. We hear all sorts of ideas about what love is. But the best source is Jesus. Jesus, in laying down his life for us, is the best definition of love. How did Jesus model what love is? The most obvious way Jesus laid down his life for us was shown by his willingness to go to the cross for us. He allowed himself to be beaten, tortured and killed. He bore our sins and took on the punishment we deserved. Therefore, to love someone is to be willing to die a gruesome death for that person. As if this was not enough, Jesus also showed his love in other ways. He chose to serve people rather than live a comfortable life. He taught and healed because these were the people’s greatest needs. Jesus spent his life serving the needs of others more than his own. Thus, both in life and in death, Jesus gave us a model on how to love.

Some of us may be leading people. Some of us may be preaching, discipling and teaching. Some of us may be encouraging and strengthening. So we may be doing many things for the church, but let us not forget that the goal is not to do many things for the church. The goal is to love our brothers and sisters as Jesus did.

Some people are difficult to love. Some people are so different from us. Some may be engaged in very obvious sins that we are repulsed by them. Some are weak that they require so much help from us. Some would not appreciate the love that we give them. There will always be people who are difficult for us to love. But we should deny ourselves and love them anyway.

One practical way we can love is by having pity on our brothers and sisters in need. If we have material possessions, we can share with those in need. We ourselves may be needy, but there will always be other people more needy than us. During this time of pandemic many people lost their source of income. Let’s keep our eyes and our hearts open especially for those too shy to ask for help. Let’s keep asking others how they are doing. Let’s not assume everyone is doing great. Sometimes, the neediest person is the one who seems to be doing well. Let’s not be too focused on our needs. With all of us staying at home, it is easier to be inward focused and selfish. Let’s resist that temptation.

We can be loving with our words and we should do that. But love must be seen in our actions as well. Let us do something, an act of love, for someone every day.

We should also love in truth. We love in truth when our loving action comes from our hearts. Our concern for others must be genuine. Our love must be sincere (Romans 12:9). Some of us may love simply because we are expected to. We help brothers and sisters because they are in our small groups or we are leading them or we were told to care for them. But would we still be willing to help even if there is no such expectation?

We should also meet the spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters. Sometimes this is harder than meeting physical needs because it requires that we do better than them spiritually. How can we help them spiritually if we ourselves are not doing well spiritually? Helping in this way compels us to be the kind of disciple we are challenging others to become. Helping in this way also requires us to invest our lives in people. This makes us vulnerable and exposes us to possible hurt feelings. Instead of just giving material things, sometimes love requires us to give our hearts. This may be difficult for some of us because “we are not built that way.” This may also be difficult for some of us because of bad experiences in the past. Our past hurts may make us hesitant to love in this way. But we are all called to love as Jesus loved.

Let us all love our brothers and sisters in words, actions and in truth just as Jesus did.