



## THERE'S NOTHING GREATER!

by Vincent M. Newfield

And regardless of what else you put on, *wear love*. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it! —Colossians 3:14 THE MESSAGE

It was D.H. Holmes Department store nineteen eighty-something. I was a salesman selling shirts and ties in the men's department. A man walked in who was obviously having a bad day. Aggravation and irritation were written all over his face as with a permanent marker. I was very uneasy and even a bit intimidated, but I approached him as I would any other customer and offered to help. In a muffled voice, he attempted to tell me what he was looking for. After several stabs at presenting him what he was seeking, it was apparent that he really didn't know what he wanted. I could sense that my inability to secure what he sought after was only fueling the fire of his fury. I remember thinking to myself, *Lord, I don't mean to frustrate this guy further, but it seems like that is exactly what I am doing*. Then it happened—he reached a breaking point. With a snarl on his face, he flung a few profanities at me. Stunned and seemingly frozen near the register, I offered up to God an internal, lightning fast flash of prayer: "Help!"

Before I had time to thoroughly think it through, the Lord mercifully reminded me of the best response I could give. The Holy Spirit brought to my memory the first Scripture my brother Frank had taught me when we were kids: *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger* (KJV). With as much kindness as I could possibly muster at the moment, I said, "Sir, I'm sorry for my attitude. Please forgive me. I don't mean to be aggravate or frustrate you. I really want to help you find what you need. If you can just help me understand what you're looking for, I think we can find it." Within minutes, the cold and calloused demeanor of the man melted. His facial expressions and body posture softened, and in a humbled voice he offered more detailed direction on the item he was searching for. In less than ten minutes, we found what he was after, and during the course of that time he apologized to me at least three times for the rude remarks he had hurled at me earlier. With a bag in his hand and a smile on his face, he left the department touched by God's grace. What did it? LOVE. *There's nothing greater.*

"You can take **nothing greater** to the heathen world than the impress and reflection of the Love of God upon your own character. That is the universal language. It will take you years to speak Chinese, or in the dialects of India. From the day you land, that language of love, understood by all, will be pouring forth its unconscious eloquence. It is the man who is the missionary, it is not his words. His character is his message."

—Henry Drummond (1851-1897)

As I write, I am reminded of the supreme section of scripture in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: *I am If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love* (The Message).

I marvel at the moments the Master moves through me to minister to others in the community. But from time to time, I must remind myself that my ministry to others starts with the “others” under my roof—my wonderful wife, Allison, and my four fabulous girls. They are as proud of me as anyone could be for all that God enables me to do. But they don’t just want to *hear* about love in a book I write or *see* me teach about it from a pulpit where I preach. What they want to hear and what they want to see is the *real* me, living the message of love out loud in our living room during the week. The truth is, regardless of how many degrees decorate our walls, or how many dollars we donate to humanitarian efforts, or how many hours a day we read the Bible and pray... It is all *worthless* if we fail to express love—the very essence of the everlasting Father. “God, help us to grasp hold of your grace, throughout each and every day that we face. Instead of intellect, charm or force, let us choose our Master’s most effective course. The greatest weapon...the greatest witness...the greatest way is **love**. *There’s nothing greater!*”

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