

BE

DARING

PUT YOUR FAITH WHERE THE ACTION IS

NT COMMENTARY

ACTS 13—28

Warren W. Wiersbe

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To
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THE BIG IDEA

An Introduction to *Be Daring*
by Ken Baugh

Lambie is my daughter Jessy's favorite stuffed animal. He is known by other names too—like Lambie Pie, the Lamb, and that dirty old thing. If you saw him up close, you would notice that Lambie isn't particularly attractive. In fact, he slouches now when you hold him, his ears are curled from being rubbed too much and are no longer lined with soft white satin, and his fleece has been worn off. His music box doesn't work anymore, and to anyone but Jessy, Lambie would be ready for the trash, or at least ready to be taken off the roster of active duty. Years ago, Jessy took this lamb everywhere. As time passed, Lambie started showing signs of dirt and wear to the point that I became more and more embarrassed that my beautiful little daughter was carrying around this filthy stuffed animal. So I bought her another Lambie. I went to the exact same store and bought the exact same one.

This new lamb—we'll call him Lambie Jr.—was identical to what Lambie Sr. had looked like when Jessy first brought him home. He was bright white, his fleece was soft, and he had a blue satin ribbon around his neck. The white satin that lined his ears was very nice to rub between little

fingers. His music box worked perfectly, playing a delightful version of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” And most of all, he was clean.

I naively thought Jessy would take to this new lamb so I could retire Lambie Sr. to the stuffed-animal hall of fame. I thought we could bronze him or something. Well, Jessy didn’t like the new lamb as much as I had hoped. In fact, she totally ignored him. (Don’t worry, we’ve had him in stuffed-animal therapy for years; those lamb whisperers can do amazing things.)

But why didn’t Jessy want the new lamb? Simply because Lambie Sr. is family. And over the last twenty-one years, this dirty little stuffed animal has had many adventures. You could make a movie about him and call it *The Excellent Adventures of Lambie Pie*. Lambie has been found wandering in shopping malls after Jessy accidentally forgot him. He has been left at people’s houses after sleepovers, and even left at restaurants, but no matter where he’s misplaced, somehow he always finds his way back into Jessy’s bed before she goes to sleep at night—I have always seen to that!

The truth is, Jessy loves Lambie, and if you love Jessy, you’ll love her lamb, too. It’s a package deal. And it doesn’t matter what he looks like today, it doesn’t matter that he’s not as attractive as he was in his glory days—the fact remains that Jessy loves Lambie with the kind of love that makes him precious to anyone who loves Jessy. Love Jessy, love her Lambie. She doesn’t love Lambie because he’s beautiful; she loves him with the kind of love that makes him beautiful, the kind of love with which God loves us, a love that is unconditional and sacrificial. And God wants us, His disciples, to love people in the same way.

But that takes an enormous amount of courage. It takes courage to love people the way that God loves us. Have you ever wondered why Barnabas and Paul were so effective during the days of the early church as recorded in Acts? It’s because they loved people with courageous, unconditional, sacrificial love that put the eternal best interests of others above themselves.

You see, the Big Idea that runs throughout Acts 13—28 is courage to put your faith on the front lines. And this courage is motivated by a deep and sincere love for people. So I dare you to love people like Jesus loves you—no, I double-dog dare you!

So what does it look like to love people the way Jesus loves us? First, we must give them love with no strings attached, because Jesus loves us unconditionally. Unconditional love doesn't say "I love you if ..." or "I'll love you when ..." or even, "I love you because ..." Unconditional love is a commitment that God makes to us that is grounded in His character. Paul says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8 NIV). It is truly amazing to realize that even when I was in a state of total and complete rebellion against God, Jesus still loved me enough to die on a cross to pay the price for my sins. The best news a person will ever hear is that God loves sinners—sinners like you and me.

In 1868, a very young Dwight L. Moody, who later became the greatest evangelist of the nineteenth century, let a man named Henry Moorhouse fill the pulpit for him at his church in Chicago while he was out of town. When Moody returned, he asked his wife how Moorhouse did. She said, "I liked him very much, but he preaches a little differently than you do."

"How is that?" asked Moody.

"Well," his wife said, "he tells the worst sinners that God loves them."

Moody replied, "Well, then, he is wrong."

The following Sunday, Moody let Moorhouse preach again so that he could hear him himself. Here is what Moody said of the sermon:

Moorhouse turned to John 3:16 and preached the most extraordinary sermon from that verse. He went through the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation, proving that, in all ages, God loved the world.... Up until that time, I

never knew that God loves us so much. This old heart of mine began to thaw out; I could not keep back the tears. He beat that truth down into my heart and I have never doubted it since.... I used to preach that God was behind the sinner with a double-edged sword, ready to hack him down. But I now realize that God is behind the sinner with his eternal love, and what that man is running away from is the love of God. (John Pollock, *D. L. Moody: Moody Without Sankey* [Fearn, Scotland, UK: Christian Focus, 1995], 92)

Do you know why Moody became such an effective evangelist? Because he began to love people like God loved him. God's love is eternal, because His love is unconditional. It takes courage to love people like that.

Second, if we are to love people the way Jesus loves us, we must love them sacrificially. Sacrificial love is bent on looking out for the best interests of the other person above our own. Jesus put it this way: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13 NIV). When we truly love another person, we give ourselves for them no matter what the personal cost. It could cost our reputation, it could cost money, and it will certainly cost time, but sacrificial love is the type of love that looks out for the best interests of the other person irrespective of personal gain or loss. Paul says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3–4 NIV). Jesus modeled sacrificial love for us when He died on the cross, and that death is the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever seen.

You know, people can be prepared for the ministry through Bible classes, theological training, and mentoring, but if they don't love people

the way that Jesus loved, their ministry will be largely ineffective (see 1 Cor. 13:1–3). One of the primary reasons that the early church took off is that Barnabas and Paul loved people the way that Jesus loved them, unconditionally and sacrificially. For them, love was the supreme virtue in the Christian life and the primary source that fueled their courage in the face of relentless opposition. Unless you love people as Jesus loves you, you will never be willing to put your faith on the front lines. I double-dog dare you to love like that!

Dr. Wiersbe's commentaries have been a source of guidance and strength to me over the many years that I have been a pastor. His unique style is theologically sound but not overly academic. He explains the deep truths of Scripture in a way that everyone can understand and apply. Whether you're a Bible scholar or a brand-new believer in Christ, you will benefit, as I have, from Warren's insights. With your Bible in one hand and Dr. Wiersbe's commentary in the other, you will be able to unpack the deep truths of God's Word accurately and learn how to apply them to your life.

Drink deeply, my friend, of the truths of God's Word, for in them you will find Jesus Christ, and there is freedom, peace, assurance, and joy.

—Ken Baugh
Pastor of Coast Hills Community Church
Aliso Viejo, California