

IN FOCUS: God loved the world; so must we

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“For God so loved the world ...” I cannot tell you how many times I have said those words as I have quoted John 3:16. I remember saying them as a child without any real idea of what I was saying. I remember saying them to people with whom I have shared Christ, reminding them of the amazing love God has for people. Yet I think sometimes, in the familiarity of those words, we lose the intensity of the love God has for people.

Donna and I have been blessed with three great kids. Two are Steve Vernon married to great spouses. We have been blessed with two grandkids, with two more on the way. As a father and grandfather, the love I have for all of them is strong. There is not anything I would not do for them or at least try to do for them.

Then I read about the love of God for the world. He gave the Son he loved more perfectly than I can ever love my kids, and gave him so the world could be saved.

The past few weeks, we have watched events in Egypt as unrest and rebellion have broken out. There has been hatred in the streets. There is a longing for something more. There are times when it seems hatred, bitterness, revenge and rage are the prevailing emotions of the day.

Jesus called us to be the light of the world. That light is based in the love of God. It is the light that shines as the love of God shines through our lives into the lives of others. It is light that lights the darkness of this world. It is love that is beyond definition and description. It is love that demands to be shared.

As I look at the world and the gospel, I am reminded the reason for hope is the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is hope I can share personally. I can share it through my church. I can join with other churches across the state to shine a light on a dark world that does not know God so loved the world.

That is our journey together as Texas Baptists. It is a journey that takes us next door, across the area, across the state and to the ends of the earth. It is a journey that allows us to share what we know of the love of God in Christ. We are witnesses of that love. We share the love of Christ that flows through us because God so loved the world.

That God so loved the world can never be taken for granted. It is to be shared. Welcome to the journey, as together we share the love of our Lord with our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.

—Steve Vernon is associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board.