

“40/50 Days of Love” pt. 1

“Let Love Be Your Aim”

Mark 12:28-34

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

1 Cor. 14:1 (LB) *“Let love be your greatest aim.”*

I want to begin by asking you a question. How would you complete this sentence? My number one goal in life is...

Would you say, my number one goal in life is to be happy? Or to be loved. Or to succeed at a career. Or is it comfort or having fun or retiring.

How would you answer that question?

It’s very, very important. Because however you answer that question, that is your dominant life principle.

Everybody’s got a dominant life principle. It’s the most important value in your life. You may have never thought it through but you use it all the time. Every time you make a decision, every time you have a choice, you access the database in your brain and you decide what you’re going to do based on your dominant life value

For instance if my dominant life principle is to have fun then this evening if I get a couple of invitations on the phone I’m going to tend to choose the thing that’s the most fun to do.

If my dominant life principle is comfort, then I’m going to tend to choose the easiest thing to do, what’s the most convenient thing. “I’d rather just stay home and lie on the couch and watch TV.”

If my dominant life value or principle is safety, then I'm going to tend to make every decision in life based on what's the safest choice.

Do you think God has anything to say about this?

In the Bible in the book of 1 Corinthians 14:1 he says this, "*Let love be your greatest aim.*"

Not status, not success, not possessions, or power or privilege or prestige, not comfort, not money. He says you should make love the number one aim in life. Why? Because God is love and he wants you to be like him.

God is love. He wants us to be like him. So he created us to learn how to love.

Why didn't God just create you to take you to heaven? He allows you here on earth in order to learn to love.

In fact, one day Jesus was walking down the street and a guy came up to him and he said, Lord what is the most important command in the Bible. God can you tell me what really matters most, what should I really focus on? Jesus said, I can do that. I can summarize the entire Bible for you in two sentences. If you get these two things you get it.

It's called the Great Commandment. Mark 12. Jesus said, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind and all your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. There are no commands more important than these.*" That's pretty clear.

That's why you are alive. If you go all through life it doesn't matter how much you acquire, and how much you achieve, and how many accomplishments you make and how many rewards or how famous you become. One day you're going to stand before God and he's going to say, "Did you learn to love me? And did you learn to love other people? That's why we want to do this 40/50 days of love.

In fact, the Bible says this, 1 Corinthians 16:14 "*Everything you do must be done with love.*"

I think this is a great verse for us to memorize together before we start 40/50 Days of Love. **1 Corinthians 16:14** "*Everything you do must be done with love.*"

Today we're going to begin the journey of how you do everything with love.

As we begin the journey together, I thought it would be helpful to start with the definition of love. We throw this word around. I love hot dogs. I love salsa. I love Krispy Kreme. I love my wife. I love America. I love God. But not all in that order and not all in the same way.

Today as we kick it off we're going to look at **the basics of love**. We might just call this Love 101 to set up what we're going to look at over the next few weeks. All that we're going to do together in the next Forty/fifty Days of Love. Today were going to start by looking at:

Five things the Bible says about this kind of love.

I. Principle #1 **“We love because God loves us.”**

A. God is love. And all love comes from God. And we love because God loves us.

1. 1 John 4:7-8 it says, *“Love comes from God for God is love.”*

2. It says God is love.

a. He wants us to be like him. .

3. The Bible says in 1 John 4:19 *“We love because God first loved us.”*

4. If you’re going to talk about learning to love other people, you’ve got to first understand how much God loves you.

5. I want us to experience the love of God.

6. So during this series, we’re going to work on this. We’re going to experience it.

B. 1 John 4:16 says this *“We know and we rely on the love that God has for us.”*

1. Do you know and rely on the love of God?

II. Principle #2 **Love is a choice and a commitment.**

A. You choose to love or you choose not to love.

1. Today we’ve bought into this myth that love is uncontrollable

a. We say, *“I fell in love.”*

b. Like it was a ditch. That’s not love.

B. You can’t force somebody to fall in love with you.

1. And you can’t force them to stay in love with you.

2. Deut. 30, *“Choose to love the Lord your God and commit yourself to him.”*

3. But as it says, choose.

4. When people say, *“I just don’t love her/him any more,”*

5. Their *choosing* not to love them any more.

6. And you can choose not to love anybody.

7. So when you say, *“I don’t love him/her anymore,”* that’s your choice but don’t blame it on circumstances.

III. Principle #3 **Love is an action not just an emotion.**

A. In the Bible, over and over, we are commanded by God to love each other.

1. And you cannot command an emotion.
 2. If I told you right now “Be sad!” You can’t just be sad on cue.
 3. As a parent have you ever told a little kid, “Be happy!” *I’m trying, daddy!*
 4. But love is something you do.
 5. It produces emotion but it is an action.
 6. 1 John 3:18 *“Let us love not with words or tongue but with action and in truth.”*
 7. It’s like the girlfriend who said of her boyfriend “He’s always saying ‘Honey, I’d die for you.’” “He always says that but He never does it.”
- B. Acting in love when you don’t feel it is the highest form of love.
1. It’s actually a more mature love when you act loving toward a person when they’re not responding to you or you don’t feel it.
 2. It’s easy to love somebody who loves you. That’s nothing.
 3. Real love acts and does the loving thing when they don’t deserve it, when they don’t respond or when you don’t feel it.
 4. James says you do all this big talk about love and all this talk about faith but if you don’t follow it with actions, it’s worthless.
 5. It’s easier to act your way into a feeling than it is to feel your way into an action.
- C. When the flames gone out how do you rekindle that romance?
1. How do you rekindle the feeling of love?
 2. You act your way into a feeling,
 3. If you act in love, the feelings will follow.
 4. In the book of Revelation Jesus says to the church *“You have left your first love.”*
 - a. Then he says three things
 - b. *“Remember what it was like at first,*
 - c. *repent [change your mind]*
 - d. *and do the things you did at the start.”*
 5. It is the same for renewing the love in a marriage or any other relationship.
 6. If the only time we pray is when we feel like it, we’ll never feel like it.

7. We need to pray when we don't feel like it.

During the 40/50 Days of Love, we're going to have some practical assignments to do. You don't learn to love by listening to a sermon. And you don't learn to love simply by reading a book. And you don't learn to love by going to a small group and discussing and watching some videos. Those are all helpful things. But you actually learn to love by practicing it. By doing it.

IV. Principle #4 **The Bible says that love is a skill.**

A. It's something you can get good at.

1. Love is a skill that can be learned.
2. We want our church to be known as the most loving church around.
3. The Bible says in 1 John 4:7 "*Dear friends, let us practice loving each other.*"
4. The first time you do it, it feels awkward.
 - a. The more you do it the better you get at it.
5. How do porcupines survive and even thrive? How do they get past all the prickliness and go on? Well, actually they learn to dance. Seriously. They do a kind of two step to get along and we could all learn a lesson here. Called a "love dance" by some, porcupines will waddle on their hind feet to engender a better situation during mating. When disposed, they nuzzle noses and place their front paws on each other's shoulders and sort of waltz a little. Each flattens their quills so to not hurt the other.
6. The bible says "*... for love comes from God. Those who are loving and kind show that they are the children of God and they're getting to know him better.*"
7. 1 Timothy 4:15 "*Practice these things and devote yourself to them in order that your progress may be seen by all.*"
- 8.

V. Principle #5 **The Bible says that love is a skill.**

You can't claim to be a loving person unless you are habitually loving.

1. Your character is the sum of your habits.
2. If you only love off and on like a light switch, you are not a loving person.
3. Luke 6:32 "*If you only love those who love you what credit is that to you?*"
4. Being a loving person is when you love the unlovely,
 - a. when you love people who don't love you,

- b. when you love people who irritate you,
 - c. when you love people who back bite you and gossip about you.
 - 5. Anybody can love people who love them.
 - a. That's takes no character at all.
 - 6. A dog has that kind of love. You pet the dog, you feed the dog, guess what? It'll wag its tail.
 - 7. But the point is God says love must become a habit..
 - 8. If I said to my wife, "Honey I will be faithful to you six days a week." That partial faithfulness is unfaithfulness. .
 - 9. I can't say I'm honest if I say, "I'll tell you the truth ninety percent of the time."
 - 10. You cannot claim and say, "I'm a loving person," if you're only loving to certain kinds of people.
- B. Love has to become a lifestyle.
- 1. The Bible says in Heb.13 *"Continue to love each other with true Christian love."*
 - a. Continue, means make a habit of it.
 - b. Do it all the time.
 - 2. During Forty Days of Love we're going to learn the habits of love.
 - 3. Do you know how long it takes to develop a good habit?
 - a. It takes about six weeks to develop a habit. That's forty two days.
 - 4. That's why for forty/fifty days we're going to be focusing on the habits of love.
- C. The Bible says this *"Test yourselves to make sure you're solid in the faith. Don't drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourselves regular checkups. You need first hand evidence, not mere hearsay, that Jesus Christ is in you. Test it out. If you fail the test, do something about it."*

You say, "Ok I'm in. I want to become a great lover. I want to develop loving relationships. I want to be known as 'That's the most loving person I've ever met.'" How do you do it? Five things.

We're going to look at these in detail in the weeks ahead. This is just kind of like the index for Forty Days of Love.

- 1. **To become great at relationships we must commit to growing.** You don't become a great lover accidentally. It is intentional.
 - 2. **Learn how Jesus did it.**

Through hearing, through reading, through study, through memorizing.

3. The third thing we're going to do is we're going to practice the skills.

Get out with people, Jesus set the example of that.

4. We're going to develop the habits.

You're going to learn some new habits over the next forty days, the habits of the heart.

5. You need to trust God to help.

Trust God to help you and make you more loving.

Philippians 1:9 *"This is my prayer for you, that your love will grow more and more and that you will have knowledge and understanding with your love,"*

That is my prayer for you and for our church. That together we will be known as a church that loves. I want to grow in love and I want you to grow in love. What the world needs are people who genuinely love. It's all about love.

Dear Jesus, I want to be more loving. I want to work on my relationships. I want to learn to love you with all of my heart. And I want to learn to love everybody else. I want to be known as the most loving person people know. So I'm going to make it my primary value in life, my number one goal to learn to love you and to learn to love other people because it's all about love. Lord, I've got a lot of hurts in my heart that need to be healed. I need to be filled with your love. I can't give to others what I don't feel. I need to feel forgiven. I need to experience your grace. I need to know your love so it can overflow out of my life into others. Replace my fears with your love. Replace my hurts with your peace. I want to learn to know you and love you, Jesus Christ..." AMEN!