

## Being Loveable in an Unloving World

John 15:15-17

We are ending the series on "Life's Values." In this segment we are talking today about one of the most important values. I cannot believe we have gotten all the way through this series without doing one of those values exercises. You sit down and make a decision like "You are in a rubber raft with a friend. You just had ship wreck. You have in the rubber raft a set of flares, enough food for a week and five gallons of water. You cannot make it to land without throwing one thing overboard. What do you throw overboard?" If you say, "My friend" I am glad you are here.

In this segment we are going to talk about the value of love. Jesus was asked a values question once. Values are all about what is important, what is the most important thing on the list. Jesus was asked what to me is the ultimate values question. Some teachers of the law of the Old Testament came to Him and said, Jesus, there are lots of commands of God in the Old Testament. You have the Big Ten and then you have a lot of others. What is the most important? That is a values question. Jesus without hesitation looked at them and said, here is the answer, "The most important command is this 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second command is this, 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' There are no commands more important than these."

As we come to the end of this series, I can say without fear of contradiction, that the things I am going to say in this segment are much more important than anything we have already studied in this entire series. Not that I am going to say them better but this is the most important value. I have saved the best for last, as seen in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "And now these three remain. Faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." Galatians 5:14 says, "The whole law is made complete in this one command: Love your neighbor as you love

yourself." **Take the whole law and sum it up.** Love is the value that God values the most. That is what these verses clearly say. **Yet all of us struggle with this value.** We talk about making love work in our lives. But in reality, it is a struggle. Often times love goes from exciting, to exhausted, to expired.

**How do you build a love that lasts?** How do you build a love for lifetime? Two simple things you and I can do based on what God said to us about love.

1. **If I want to enjoy a genuine love in my life I have to begin by asking what love is.** Why is it so important to ask? Love is one of the most misunderstood words in our language today. I can say, I love my wife, Linda, and I love pepperoni pizza and I hope you know there is a great big difference in the way I use those two terms. **But there is no way in our language to tell.** It a very misunderstood word.

**There are many popular misconceptions about love.** But I want us to try to understand what real love really is! The truth is - we all suffer from some real misconceptions.

**The first misconception is that love is just a feeling.** A great feeling, but a feeling. It's all emotional. **It is true love produces feelings, some wonderful feelings, but it is more than a feeling.** Much deeper than that.

**The next misconception is love is uncontrollable that.** A lot of the words we use to go along with love is saying it is *uncontrollable*. We say, "I fell in love". **Like you were walking down the street and fell in love, like you fell in a ditch.** You could not help it. It is was a pure accident. The problem is if you fall in love, you can fall out of love just as easily.

What does the Bible teach us about love?

**First, love is a matter of choice.** It is controllable. Jesus commanded that we love each other. **Jesus never commanded us to feel a certain way.** He just commanded us to do the right things. You cannot command a feeling.

**But God does command our action?** He says this in Colossians 3:14 says, "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together." Notice that the Bible says, "put on love." **It is like when you get up in the morning and make a choice about what you are going to wear.** You don't just wake up and fall into the closet and come out dressed. You make a choice about what you are going to wear. **The Bible says that we are to do the same thing with love.** When you get up in the morning, make a *choice*: "I am going to love people today."

**Second, love is a matter of conduct.** It is about the way that we act. 1 John 3:18 is challenging but simple, "Let's stop just saying we love people, let us really love them, and show it by our actions."

**The Greeks had four words when they used to talk about love: affection, sexual attraction, friendship, unconditional actions of love towards another.** This last word is the word that is used here. It is the word used of God's love for us. **In other words, love is an action!** God commands us to make a commitment to *act* in love towards another person.

**How do you do that?** How does love act towards the people we want to love and maybe toward the people that are enemies? **How does love act?**

**God has given us a about how love acts in I Corinthians 13.** It is as if He knew we were going to say, "How does it work? What do I do?" **Here is a list of the "do's" and "don't's" of love!** Here is what love does not do. In other words, love is not just something we talk about. - It is something we do.

**Therefore, if I want to act like love acts, I have to:**

**First, be patient.** 1 Corinthians 13:4 says, "Love is patient." God said, "Do you want to know what love is, what love does, how love acts?" **Love requires us to have patience with other people.** Why? **Because waiting is so much a part of all of our lives.** Part of loving somebody is waiting with him or her for important things that you want to see happen in your lives. That is a part of love.

Listen to what we have been told in Ephesians 4:2, "Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love." I wish the verse had stopped with "be patient with each other" and had not added that practical part at the end, "making allowance for each other's faults because of your love." We really do not make much allowance for someone else's faults do we?

**Here is what patience is: it is making allowance for another person's faults because of my love.** There is no better example of this than *God's love for us*.

**He waits for me to grow.** He waits for me to *change*. He waits for me to *let go of a sin* that I have to deal with again and again. **He waits for me to deal with an attitude or anger.** That is God's love. If you want to love, be patient.

**Second, be kind.** The Bible says, "Love is kind." **Kindness is caring for someone in the practical and the small details of life.** Kindness is taking the grand vows in a wedding ceremony and turning them into washing dishes and taking out the trash even if it is not your turn. **Kindness is taking the great hope you have in a hospital nursery and translating them into changing dirty diapers.** That is what genuine kindness is all about. It can make an impact on a person's life.

**Through one act of kindness, you have the power to change a person's life.** That is why God says, "Love is kind." Ephesians 4:32 gives us an outline of how kindness works, "Be kind to each other,

tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you." To be kind means I have to care in my heart about what you are facing. I wonder how many times people have just wanted a word of encouragement from one of us here at church, or on your job, or even in your home.

The Bible says, "Forgiving one another." **Kindness means I forgive other people, just as God has forgiven me.** Kindness means that I act towards others like God has acted towards me. Kindness means I have a tender heart and a forgiving heart.

**Three, don't be showy.** Don't try to impress other people by bragging on yourself. 1 Corinthians 13:4 says about love, "It doesn't envy. It doesn't boast. It's not proud." **This verse is talking about insecurity.** If I have a security in my life, I do not have to boast about what I have.

**Four, don't be selfish.** The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13:5, "(Love) is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." It seems that our present-day society needs to hear this message. Indeed all of us need to hear this message.

**That verse gives us some signs of selfishness.** Rudeness is a sign of selfishness. "Self-seeking" is a sign of selfishness. **Being "easily angered" in the Greek really means, "being irritated easily."** Isn't it strange how easy it is to get irritated with the people you love.

The bible says, that love "keeps no record of wrongs." **It is so easy to have this little book in the back of your brain that when you are losing the argument you can bring it out and throw up something that happened in the past.** Love does not do that. As difficult as it might be, love understands that the past is past!

"Love isn't rude." I really don't think I need to explain the meaning of that statement.

**God has selflessly loved us all and some of us have never loved Him back.** Listen real carefully to this statement: Love is the greatest risk you will ever take. There is no greater risk; there is no greater adventure in this life. **Why? Because there are no guarantees!** You might give your heart to someone tonight, and they might walk away with it next year – there are no guarantees!

But love also provides the greatest benefits in life, the greatest joys in life. It is through the value of love that God changes us and changes the world around us. It is through love that we find our greatest fulfillment in life.

**Five, don't quit.** Corinthians says, "Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." The word "Persevere" in the Greek literally means, "tying the knot." **And the picture behind it is of two guys on a battle field who realize that when the battle comes their way they might get scared and they might run away and leave the other guy there all by themselves. So they commit themselves to each other.** They would actually take a rope and tie it from one to the other so that they wouldn't run away from one another. **Maybe that is where we get the idea of "tying the knot"!** The word "persevere" means "I am committed to you in this no matter what." **That is what genuine love is.**

Remember, in Matthew 22:36-39 Jesus said there are two priorities of love. The second one we have talked about most of this message -- "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." The first one Jesus said was "Love God. Love Him with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength." The problem comes when we try to do the second without ever getting the first in place. **And the first - loving God - is where the power comes from to do the second.**

The truth of the matter is that you and I have to make a choice. We have to choose to love "God with all (our) heart, all (our) soul, all

(our) mind, and all (our) strength.” **When you get the first one right, the rest always falls into place!**