

Your Life - Your Values #11
Being Lovable in an Unloving World
John 15:15-17

Tonight we have come to the last message in our series on "Your Life – Your Values." In today's message we are going to talk about one of the most important values. I can't 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 can't 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.

In Mark 12 some teachers of the Old Testament Law came to Jesus and asked Him ultimate value question. They had been taught the "10" Commandments, as well as the Levitical commandments, and then some others that the Scribes and Pharisees had added along the way. So in verse 28 He was asked, "What is the greatest of all the commandments?" And verses 30-31 tell us that 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.

1 Corinthians 13:13 says this, "And now these three remain. Faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." Love: number one. 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. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. Now, ladies and gentlemen, that is pretty incredible. 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 the truth of the matter is: it is a struggle sometimes! 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 a lifetime? How do you build the kind of love where you can go into a relationship feeling like "This is going to work!" rather than feeling like "I think this is going to fail."

So where do we start in this matter of love? I am totally convinced the first place to start in our understanding of developing real and true love is to find out what it is! 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.

Because love is such a misunderstood word we have developed some real misconceptions.

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

The next misconception is that love is uncontrollable. Have you ever heard someone say, "I couldn't help it we just fell in love." And we accept that kind of statement as true! Like you were walking down the street and fell in love, like you fell in a ditch. **You could not help it.** It was a pure accident.

The problem is if you fall in love, you can fall out of love just as easily.

Therefore, in order to find the real truth concerning love we need to go to the source of all truth – the Bible. What does God say about this matter of love? I want to share with you two things:

First, love is a matter of choice. That means 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, "I want you to make a conscious choice to love." 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." It is a *choice*. It is not just an accident in our lives.

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 talked 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 affects our conduct – the way we act toward those we love!** Listen, when there is real love on the *inside* it will show up in how you treat people on the *outside*! God commands us to make a commitment to *act* in love towards another person.

How does love act? How do *I* act like *love* acts? This is the tough part. Once I have found out what love *is*, the Bible says I have got to start *living* it in my life. So how do I do that?

Well, to make sure there was no confusion about how we *flesh* out love in our everyday living He us the instructions on how. I am pretty certain I am not going to be sharing anything new with anybody. And the list is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

If I want to act like love acts, I have to understand:

First, love is *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?" **Patience. That is the first word He uses when it comes to love.** You spell love with four letters (not the ones you think): T-I-M-E. Love takes time. **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 them for important things that you want to see happen in your lives.** That is a part of love.

Ephesians 4:2 talks about how this patient love acts, "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." Here is what patience is: it is making allowance for another person's faults because of my love.

Second, love is *kind*. The Bible says, "Love is kind." Let me stop right here and talk about an area of kindness that most of us totally overlook. Ephesians

4:32 tells us, gives us an outline of how kindness works, "Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you."

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.

Third, love is not showy. Corinthians 13:4 says about love, "It doesn't envy. It doesn't boast. It's not proud." The King James Version says, "Love is not boastful." That simply means: you don't have to brag about real love! Constantly having to brag about how much you love someone is an indication of an area of insecurity. **If I have a security in my love, I do not have to envy what you have.** If I have a security in my love, I do not have to boast about what I have.

Do you know why people are filled with jealousy? Insecurity! If I am secure in my relationship I am not jealous!

Four, love is not 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." That verse gives us some signs of selfishness. **Rudeness is a sign of selfishness.** Rudeness shows up in many ways: in my words, in my actions, in my reactions. All of these things reveal an attitude of selfishness!

Five, love does not quit. The Bible says, "Love endures all things." The value of love is that it "endures" those times of difficulty; those times of misunderstanding; those times when it seems as if all dreams are lost.

I read an article that said love and marriage could be compared to riding a bicycle, as long as you are going downhill it can be a fun ride. And that is the way most relationships start. You have the adrenalin going, you have the emotions going, you have some hormones kicking in. **You are excited.** It is great to be in love. Listen, love and marriage is downhill at the beginning. **Then you hit a sort of a level place and slowly come to a stop.** When it stops, the two of you on the bicycle of life look at each other and think, "One of us has to get off and push this thing!" And that is where to *work* comes in! **And ladies and gentlemen, love and marriage is not always easy – sometimes it is hard!** And, as sad as it is, far too many couples are not willing to put in the work to make a marriage last! They are far too willing simply to bail out and walk away!

Before you quit (and I know some of you are close to quitting in a marriage or a relationship with a child or parent or friend) before you quit, consider for a moment that there is a key that can give you the power to love.

The key is in a phrase: “Forgiving one another, as God for Christ sake has forgiven you.”

I don’t know what you are experiencing, but I know this it was nothing any greater than what God has forgiven you for!

The truth of the matter is that you and I have to make a choice.
Remember, love is a choice. We have to make a choice to accept that love into our life.