

Experiencing the Full Dimensions of Love

“God’s Dream for You” Series

Today we start from the bottom and build up. God’s Love is the foundation of all we are and everything we do. He is all about love! He dreams for you to know and experience the full dimensions of his love.

Focus Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Love Perspective:

Does this describe _____ ?

Does this describe the _____ ?

Have I considered _____ ?

Love God _____ (W _____)

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)

Love God’s _____ (F _____)

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" (James 2:15, 16)

_____ God’s Love (S _____)

"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people..." (Galatians 6:10)

_____ of God’s Love (E _____)

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

_____ into God’s Love (D _____)

"...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:20)

T _____ :

- We Worship More Fully
- We Fellowship More Truthfully
- We Serve More Powerfully
- We Evangelize More Effectively
- We Disciple More Efficiently

You have to _____
Before you can _____

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Focus Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Love Perspective:

Does this describe MY LOVE ?

Does this describe the LOVE WE HAVE AT IMMANUEL ?

Have I considered THIS IS HOW GOD LOVES ME ?

Love God SUPREMELY (WORSHIP)

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)

Love God’s FAMILY (FELLOWSHIP)

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" (James 2:15, 16)

ACT OUT God’s Love (SERVICE)

"As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people..." (Galatians 6:10)

SPREAD THE WORD of God’s Love (EVANGELISM)

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

GUIDE GROWTH into God’s Love (DISCIPLESHIP)

"...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:20)

Together:

- We Worship More Fully
- We Fellowship More Truthfully
- We Serve More Powerfully
- We Evangelize More Effectively
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“God’s Dream for You” Series – September 11, 2005

1 - Blank

In his book, “The Life You’ve Always Wanted”, John Ortberg tells of a night where he woke up and everyone in the house was asleep. Pick up the story on p. 132...

God is love. We know that. We may even know the verse from memory. But isn’t it interesting that hearing it in a story like this somehow makes it seem more real.

Today I want you to realize that God loves you. I want you to realize it before you think of any other aspect of your relationship with God because it is foundational. If you don’t believe that God loves you, if you don’t know that he does, then every other part of Christianity is going to be harder to understand and carry out (if not impossible.)

Next to our townhouse they are building more townhouses. We watch them as we eat breakfast. They are there early! But before they start to do this (picture of framed building) they have to do this (the trenches dug for footings). These buildings would not be stable and livable if there was not time put into make sure the foundations were put in to code!

Today I’m going to talk about the purpose of your life – what God says should be the priorities of your life – of all of our lives. But before we do read with me those famous words from 1 Corinthians 13. You no doubt heard them at a wedding sometime this summer. They are the Bible’s description of “true love.”

Let’s read it together...

As we look at this description I want you to ask yourself, “Does this describe the love that I have...to my spouse, my dad, my mom...the people who are closest to me?” Now there’s a convicting thought!!

Then, ask yourself, “Does this describe the kind of love that I show to the people of Immanuel? Is this how I try to relate to everyone in my church?” Another very convicting thought!

But before we get too discouraged I want you to look at this description and realize that this is how God loves you! “God is patient with you. God is kind to you. Etc, etc.

Take just a minute and process that. Let it soak in. In fact, turn to someone sitting close to you and just say, “God really loves me – and he really loves you, too.” Saying it is one thing. Actually believing it is another! That can really be hard to do but it is so necessary.

I think that’s what Paul was saying in Ephesians 3. It takes power that has to come from God to really comprehend the full dimensions of His love for you. But when it happens it can really be a rock solid foundation for your life – no matter what comes!

So...hang on to this truth from 1 Cor. 13 – This is how God loves you!

In any relationship there are rules – in the Bible the rules that govern the relationship between God and his people are called laws or commandments. You’ve heard of God’s Top 10 Commandments.

There was a time when Jesus was here on earth that some of the legal experts of that day came to test him. They weren’t satisfied with knowing the Top 10. They wanted to know which one was Number 1. This is in Matthew 22:34...

Let's read his answer – 22:37-40

I think he passed the test! But it then becomes crucial for us, now that we know that all the laws of God can be summarized with this two-part commandment. Here in lies our purpose!

We were made to love God! You come alive when you worship God. You may worship him singing loud and moving your body to songs of praise – or your style of worship may be much more subdued. The difference between an Italian and a Swede saying, "I love you," is pretty significant!! But both mean the same thing.

God doesn't care how you do it. He just asks that you love him more than anything or anyone else! He commands that you make him number 1.

Now ... does that seem a little egotistical to you? Not if you're a parent!

On the 4th of July we were at our neice's place – lots of families with little kids were there... (Carlson running out into the street – razor close call!)

God commands us to love him – to give him our everything – because he knows what is best for us. He will not withhold good from us! Nor will he tell us to do something that will harm us! But if you aren't making him #1 there are some nasty things that can happen to you and he wants you to avoid those things!

His second command – like the first – focuses on our relationship with one another. It's one thing to love God because He's perfect! But to love other people...

Vernon Grounds... "To live above with saints we love..."

But we must. It's equally his command for us! I am to love you like I love myself. I am to pray for you like I pray for my kids! I am to care about what happens to

you and do what I can to help you like I care about what happens to me! In the church this is called FELLOWSHIP. Hebrews 13 says it well...

(verses 1-3)

Outside the church it's called SERVICE. We are seeing the reality of service being played out with Hurricane Katrina Relief. The churches are stepping up – often leading the way – to bring relief to the evacuees and the displaced of the Gulf Coast.

The Bible has always been a book of compassion and caring because it was written by the God of all compassion! "The Lord is my shepherd...He makes me lie down in green pastures...He leads me beside quiet waters ... He restores my soul." It is in the very DNA of the church to care about the less fortunate because we are the Body of Christ and the Head is telling the Body to get involved! Long after others have tired of giving and have moved on to other things – back to materialism – the church must continue to remember the passion of it's Lord to care for the hurting!

Just from those verses – sometimes called the "Great Commandment Passage" – we have three of our five purposes of life.
WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, SERVICE

The other two come from the passage referred to as "The Great Commission".

Let's read it together...

(Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus said (and still says to us), "Don't keep this good news to yourself. Go and tell anyone and everyone! We call that EVANGELISM. That's one of our purposes, too!

There are many misconceptions about evangelism. Some people think they have to be Billy Graham or a pastor to be an evangelist. Some think that if they don't have all the answers to the questions they're afraid people are going to ask they don't tell anyone about Jesus. Some think it isn't politically correct to say that someone has to believe in Jesus to have a relationship with God...that it's egotistical to claim that Jesus is the way. But I still believe the best definition I've heard of evangelism is that "evangelism is nothing more than one beggar telling another beggar where to find the bread."

If you had a friend who knew a place to get gas for \$1.499 (legally) and didn't tell you what would you think of that friend? If he tells you and you decide it's too far to drive or you don't like that brand of gasoline then that's your fault but at least he told you!

The other purpose that emerges from this commission is what we call DISCIPLESHIP. Teaching others to follow Jesus' example and teachings. It's what a coach does with a football player – training him to be the best he can be! It's what a music teacher does with a student – challenging her to reach her full potential!

The Bible says that God, "has begun a good work in you and he will carry it on to completion..." (Phil. 1:6)

And these purposes are to be important to us as God's people living in this period of history. We can't just take seriously the ones that we like to do! There has to be balance.

Has this been bothering anybody else? (Communion Table off-center with Candles unbalanced)

Balance – That's why we carry out the purposes God has for us when we do them together! None of us are able to perfectly balance all 5 of these purposes in our own lives. We all lean toward our "favorites." But together we balance out! And together...

We Worship More Fully
We Fellowship More Truthfully
We Serve More Powerfully
We Evangelize More Effectively
We Discipleship More Efficiently

In the months ahead we have some great things to study from God's Word! We'll try out Small Groups and find that even though they aren't really comfortable for some of us we need them – we need each other! And we'll do some things together for the Communities around us that we will believe God wants us to do in His Name. These are going to be some good months ahead of us – Building months!

But today I am reminding you of the Foundation. God's Love for you! You have to know it before you can show it! It is the bedrock upon which everything else is built – our relationship with him, with one another and with the world!

Closing Prayer...