

The Habits of Lasting Love, pt.6, 40 Days of Love, 10.2.16

Introduction

1. The foundation for a stable life, no matter what you go through in life, is the unchanging love of God. I know that a lot of things will change in my life. But one thing I know will never change is that God will never stop loving me.
 - a. God: "I will show you my love forever. So says the Lord who saves you." Isaiah 54:8 (TEV)
2. God commands us to give that kind of love to others. A love that never gives up, perseveres, unchanging, steadfast, unwavering and enduring.
 - a. "I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you." John 15:12 (NLT)
 - b. Who has been married 40 years or more? They can tell you about this kind of love, b/c their marriage has not always been easy... .
 - c. The Deadly D's of every relationship:
 - i. Differences, Disagreements & Discord
 - ii. Disappointments, Dead-ends, & Defeats
 - iii. Delays, Doubt, Distance & Depression
 - iv. Death, Debt, Disease, Demands & Difficulties
 - d. They defeated the Big D – Divorce.
3. How do you have a love that last a life time? What are the habits?
4. "Love never stops being patient, never stops believing, never stops hoping, never gives up."
1 Cor. 13:7 (GW)

Lasting love extends grace.

1. Scripture:
 - a. Love never stops being patient...puts up with anything (MSG)...patiently accepts all things (NCV)...is always ready to make allowances (NJB).
2. This kind of love demonstrates grace, forgiveness, acceptance and patience. It allows for mistakes.
 - a. The word for patients is the word that means literally "covered with a roof." A roof covers and protects your home. It takes a lot of stress, but always covers.
 - b. In the same way this kind of love, patient love, gracious love, it covers a relationship and it lets some things slide. It doesn't haul people into account for every mistake that they make. People damage pretty easily and you need a roof on your relationship. That roof is the kind of love that extends grace.
3. Why is grace essential to relationships? Because you married a broken, imperfect person. And she married a bigger one.
 - a. Every party contributes to the discord. 1 John 1.8 – If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth.
 - b. We all need a covering of grace and patience over our brokenness.
 - c. Illust of rug on the stage covering cords (unsightly and tripping hazard) and trash.

- d. I am not suggesting you enable bad behavior or overlook hurtful relational dynamics, but you show the same kind of love God shows you.
- e. Romans 15:7 says this “Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you.” You accept them. That’s extending grace.

Lasting love expresses faith.

1. Scripture: Love never stops believing 1 Cor. 13:7b (GW)...always trusts (NIV) never loses faith (NLT)
2. Faith and love are intertwined because love is built on trust. I’m talking about trusting people. Believing in people. That’s what love is. I believe in you. I trust you. I have confidence in you.
3. There are three kinds of people in the world.
 - a. There are the gullible people who believe anything. They trust anything you say.
 - b. There are the cynics who believe nothing, skeptical, suspicious of everything.
 - c. Then there are the healthy people. The Bible says “Love always trusts...Love never stops believing... Love never loses faith.” They give people the benefit of the doubt.
4. Do you think it’s wiser or more foolish to be a little more to the cynical side or a little bit more to the trusting side?
 - a. Psychology Today magazine reported about an article in “Trust and its Consequences.” Dr. Julian Rotter of the University of Connecticut spent years studying the consequences of trust in human behavior, personality development and relationships. Let me give you a little True or False trust test.
 - i. Trusting persons tend to be more gullible.
 - ii. Trusting people tend to have a lower IQ.
 - iii. Trusting people live happier lives.
 - iv. “Gullible” is not in the dictionary.
 - b. Number one and two are false. Number three is true. Study after study after study has shown that trusting people are consistently less gullible.. They have a higher IQ and they live much happier lives than cynical, questioning, suspicious people. The Bible says and studies have shown that you are better adjusted by learning to trust.
5. One of the key evidences of trust is your willingness to give other people a second chance when they blow it. How quickly are you willing to give other people a second chance?
6. What about deep distrust due to ongoing problems?
 - a. Forgiveness can be given but trust has to be earned. Forgiveness is by grace, but trust is by works. Forgiveness is instant, but trust happens over time. You’re obligated to forgive, but you are not obligated to trust. To restore the relationship the offender(s) must:
 - i. Demonstrate genuine repentance – change of mind -> change of lifestyle. They take ownership and wake up to what needs to happen.
 - ii. Restitution wherever possible.
 - iii. Prove they have changed over time.
7. If you can’t trust the person, then trust God for a miracle; he can transform anything. The miracle needs to begin in you first; let God work on you to bring about a deeper change; don’t wait for the change to start with the other person but the miracle begins with you.

Lasting love expects the best.

1. Scripture:

- a. Love never stops hoping 1 Cor. 13:7c (GW) ...always expects the best (LB) ...always looks for the best (MSG)
2. It's forward looking. It's optimistic. It's not stuck in the past. It's not always looking backward. Lasting love is hopeful. It is forward looking. It is positive. It is expecting the best.
3. I don't know if you know this or not but people tend to live up to your expectations of them. We tend to shape the people around us by what we expect of them. Whatever you tend to expect much or little, people tend to live up to the expectations of other people.
4. Bruce Wilkinson story as a professor at Multnomah University & Section 2 students story from "7 Laws of the Learner." The students performed to their expectations. I think you see this especially with our local band programs and in the junior high choir program at LJI.
 - a. They put an expectation on the students, but there is also an anticipation that they will do their best and they have year after year.
5. Friends, who are you setting up? You can set people up with your nagging, which takes them down. "You always do this." When you say that all you're doing is guaranteeing the perpetuation of the past.
 - a. What are you doing? You're labeling, you're setting them up for failure. Don't tell it like it is. Tell it like it could be. Love always expects the best. Love says "I see what you could become. I see what you're becoming. I believe in you. I expect the best."
 - b. So who are you programming with your expectations? You don't change bad people into good people by telling them they're bad. It doesn't work. What I talk about is how God sees us and what we could become.
 - c. Guys, you want your wife to treat you like a king? Treat her like a queen. It's real simple. Emphasize the positive. Forget the nagging. Tell it like it is? No. Tell it like it can be. Visualize potential. Start expecting the best from them.
 - d. What kills marriage is not discord nor differences. What kills marriages is neglect. You stop doing the loving things that you did to woo the person.
6. Who do you need to expect the best from? Love never stops hoping.

It endures the worst.

1. Scripture: Love never gives up 1 Cor. 13:7d (GW) ...endures through every circumstance (NLT) ...always perseveres (NIV) ...never looks back, but keeps going to the end (MSG).
2. Love endures the worst. Lasting love is persistent. It is determined. It is diligent. It is resolute. It is almost stubborn in its insistence that it will not give up. It will not give up on the relationship. It stays put.
3. Do you want your relationships to be a mushroom or an oak tree?
4. There are things you will learn hanging on that you will never learn any other way. The purpose of marriage is not just to make you happy but to make you holy and teach you how to grow up. And to be unselfish. To be less thoughtful of yourself and more thoughtful of others. Great people are just ordinary people with an extraordinary amount of determination. They just don't know how to quit.
5. Some of you are ready to give up.
 - a. I want to let go, but I won't let go.
There are battles to fight by day and by night for God and the right and I will never let go. .
I'm sick tis true, and worried and blue and worn through and through but I won't let go.
I will never yield. What? Lie down in the field? Surrender my shield? No. I will never let go.

May this be my song, mid legions of wrong, oh, God! Keep me strong. But I'll never let go.

6. God brought some of you here today or you're listening on the internet to hear: Keep on. Don't let go. Don't give up. Persevere. Be stubborn about it. Hang in there. Hang on!
 - a. Gal.5.6:
7. **God just expects you to do with others what he has done with you.**
 - a. **God has extended you grace.** And he has forgiven you and he's said I sent Jesus Christ to die for all your sins. He extends you grace. If you got what you deserved you wouldn't be sitting there right now. You wouldn't be alive. He has extended you grace. He wants you to do that with others.
 - b. **He expresses faith in you.** Did you know that God believes in you? He believed in you enough to create you, to love you, to die for you, to send his Holy Spirit to live in you. He believed in you enough to give you a freedom of choice knowing that you full well could thumb your nose to God and live a self-centered life. You need to believe in the God who believes in you. He expresses faith.
 - c. **He expects the best.** He knows what you're capable of. He knows you're not living up to your potential and he doesn't nag you about it. He says this is what I see in you. He always has hope that you're going to turn your life completely over to him and he expects the best.
 - d. **God has endured the worst both from and with you.** and put up with it all and he's never given up on you. He is with you through life's worst experiences. Do the same for others!

Conclusion

We've been studying now for six weeks 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter on love in the Bible. I want to end by reading a paraphrase of this chapter on love.

"Because God loves me he is slow to lose patience with me. Because God loves me he takes the circumstances of my life and he uses them in a constructive way for my growth. Because God loves me he does not treat me as an object to be possessed or manipulated. Because God loves me he has no need to impress me with how great and powerful he is because he's God. Nor does he belittle me as his child in order to show me how important he is. Because God loves me he is for me and he wants to see me mature and develop in his love. Because God loves me he does not keep score of all my sins and then beat me over the head with them whenever he gets the chance."

This is the real secret to learning a lasting love. Letting God's love flow through you. The Bible says "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." This is the secret of lasting love. It takes Christ's love in you. Human love wears out. That's why we've got those divorce statistics. But Christ's love is eternal. Before you can offer it to others you've got to get it in you.

God brought you here for this service. God brought you here today to say, today's your day. This is the day you're stepping across the line. This is the day you're going to say I'm going to become a great lover and I'm going to start by getting God's love in my life. I'm going to open my life to Jesus Christ and let him fill me with his love in ways that I can't love.

Prayer:

Would you pray this prayer in your heart? Dear God I need to feel your love. Today I'm opening myself up in a way like never before. Put your love in every room in my heart. Fill my mind, my life, my body, my hands, my feet with your love. Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me. Thank you for creating me. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for giving the promise of your Spirit to be put inside me. I don't understand it all but I want to be filled with your love and I want to learn to love you and I want to learn to love the people in my life. Forgive me for my immature love. I want to become a mature lover. I ask you to do in me and in my relationships what I could never do on my own. I want to learn to offer grace. I want to learn to express faith and trust. I want to learn to expect the best. I want to learn to endure the worst even in sickness and in health. I pray this prayer, humbly, in Jesus' name. Amen.